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CURRENT NOTES

The Newsletter For ATARI Owners

Published By

ACE

The Washington Area
Atari
Computer
Enthusiasts

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Circulation: John Lauer, Ed Seward
Columnists: M. Evan Brooks, Jay Gerber, Roland Gabeler, Jack Holtzhauer, Bob Kelly, Ed Seward, Jon Smith, Stevenson, Francese, and Burke.

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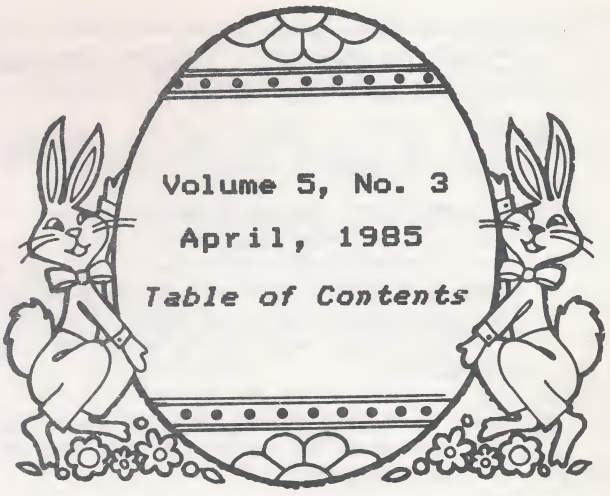

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SECRET SUNNYVALE CORRESPONDENT

CNR: Well, April is upon us and we're hoping for good news. You wouldn't let us down NOW, would you?

SSC: Of COURSE not! The new XE and ST models will be out in April as I have said, and the 130 ST should sell for less than $200. You'll definitely want to pick one up. Much of the new and future software will be looking for that extra 64k. If you don't have it, the program will not be able to offer you all its features.

CNR: Will we be able to use the 3.5" micro-diskettes? And what about the new DOS 2.5; does this work with the older hardware?

SSC: The 3.5" drives are designed to work with the ST models because the controller chip is in the computer. The new 5.25" drives will also be available. As for the new DOS, ALL the user groups will be getting one disk with DOS 2.5 and a manual. You will be permitted to copy the disk AND the manual. DOS 2.5 is more of 2.0+ rather than a hybrid or mix of 2.0 and 3.0. It will help out the 1050 owners moreso than the 810 and third-party drive owners. I think you'll like it.

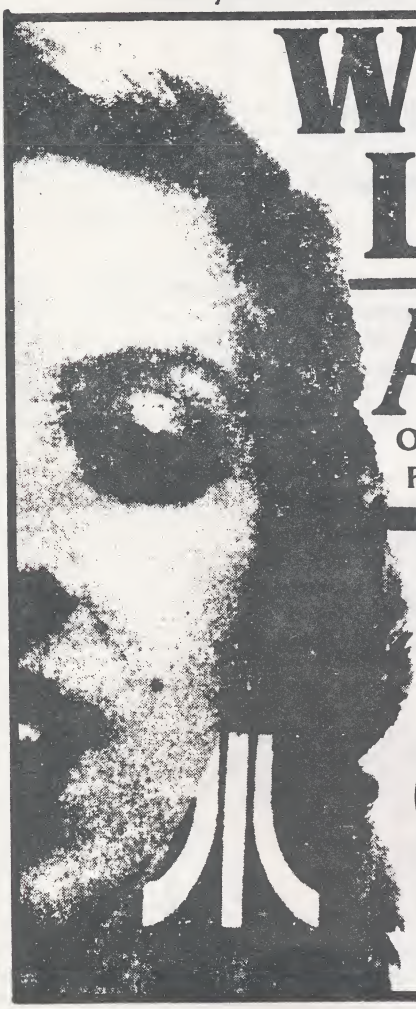
CNR: Any news on your 'music machine'?

SSC: Yes, the XEM series will be a dedicated piece of hardware that will offer much to the musician, both novice and professional alike. Some software will be packaged with it and other software products will be available separately. You will be able to print the music you compose and perhaps a real-time translator; this would actually print out whatever was played on a keyboard, if that's what you've got plugged in to it. This will be available late this year, but will definitely be worth the wait. Have I lead you wrong yet?

CNR: Any new software releases? Anything to watch for?

SSC: All of what you saw at the CES in January will be out by June. Believe me, we're trying to get the best product out, at the best price just as fast as we can. We also want to make sure that the software is 'bug free'. So, a little patience will go a long way. Stick with me.

CNR: OK, I guess we'll get ALL the news next month; the stores will have the hardware and software and we can go touch, feel and taste it! Be talkin' to ya!



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ATARI SCUTTLEBITS

by Bob Kelly

As I started to sketch out this month's column, I was reminded of the different cultural perspective on approaching a business task in the United States as compared to many countries in Asia. The difference is somewhat similar to the plight of a weather forecaster. Does he say the sky is partly cloudy or partly sunny? In the U.S. environment, Americans generally begin a business discussion by asking "what is the problem?" - i.e., partly cloudy. In Asia, they might say "can you show me how it works?" - the opposite side of the coin, partly sunny. It's all in how you view a situation.

How does this relate to Atari's marketing efforts? Well, I prefer to adopt the Asian perspective and view the future for Atari as partly sunny. I will not be a cheerleader for Atari, but I believe Jack Tramiel/Atari's business fortunes are improving and with a little luck.....who knows!.

Partly Sunny

In marketing its new computers, Atari's strengths are:

- Tramiel's record of success in the electronics industry
- Enthusiasm generated by successful CES show in January
- Support of "Japan Incorporated"
- User group network which is extremely loyal

Enough has been written on Jack Tramiel's previous business successes as well as the remarkable CES show in January. I will not rehash why the market views these as positive for Atari's future.

The support of "Japan Incorporated" refers to a comment made by one of the Tramiel sons when asked where the new products are being manufactured. I can never remember the sons' names and faces - Curley, Mo and Larry? In any event, it's no secret that the Japanese electronics industry is interested in further penetration of the U.S. home computer market and producing equipment for Atari may be one of their best bets to achieve that goal. Japanese producers take a long-term view of the market, not concentrating solely on the next quarterly profit statement. In other words, they will provide, to a degree, more financial leeway for Atari to gain a foothold in the market than would U.S. producers/suppliers - if they had the chance to do so, which they don't. Further, this relationship with "Japan Inc." is clearly a strength for Atari's marketing plan because it allows for some extra time, if needed, to develop the hardware and quality control procedures for those last minute bugs and for software developers. However, I am less sure this relationship is in the long-term interest of the U.S. computer industry and the U.S. economy.

The other strength for the new Atari is you and me - the user. So far, this strength has been largely ignored. Atari has made no direct contact with user groups, that I know of, in connection with their new machines. Oh no, you say, you have heard that someone in California is trying to organize a National User's Network (letters written on a Gemini 10x - talk about financial resources). I stress the point that Atari has made no promise to support this individual's efforts to organize. Then there is Antic which is publishing all that inside scoop based on its close relationship with Atari. Well, if you were to ask me, Antic's scoops sound like Atari press releases. One might suspect that Antic has become an organ for Atari in order to save their own corporate hide. Do you think Antic has in the past or will in the future truly represent the user interest with Atari? In sum, I have yet to see or even perceive any action by Atari which involved using its own money to gain user support.

The puzzle is why Atari has not reached out, as Apple did, to encourage users to buy the new 16-bit machine. User groups are an attractive vehicle because many regular members, at least in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area, tend to work with computers in their business/professional life or influence computer decisions within their corporation or Government Agency (systems analysts, programmers, economists, engineers, etc.). Needless to say, this influence carries over into private, social acquaintances affecting home computer purchases.

Partly Cloudy

What of the clouds? There appears to be three distinct weaknesses in the Atari campaign:

- The software for the ST will not be compatible with Ms-Dos
- Competition between the 8-bit and 16-bit line of computers
- Lack of new software on the market for existing machines.

Atari is taking a risk by not becoming another MS-DOS look-alike. Individuality is rarely rewarded in the market place. But when it is, one can win in a big way. Tramiel is clearly playing to win big. The immediate consequence of Atari's no MS-DOS decision, for you the user, is that less software is available and the eventual primary applications market for the ST is less certain. However, if the Atari ST is a success from a technological point of view, compatibility won't remain a major market hurdle. Further, we have all been told that it won't be difficult to port-over the existing MacIntosh programs. If this is true, it will help alleviate the initial dearth of software for the ST. Yet, here again is another compelling reason to get user groups involved. The ST will need simple application programs and utilities. What better way to get them written and maybe even some BBS's established than the user groups. However, even with these positive developments, it will remain an uphill struggle for Atari against MS-DOS.

If I were in the Atari boardroom today, the question I would least like to answer would be how to market the 8-

bit computer alongside the new 16-bit ST. This presents a real dilema and involves both risk and uncertainty. To clarify, if Atari is perceived by user groups to move too quickly on the 16-bit machines, they may feel abandoned with probably deleterous effects upon all Atari sales. If Atari moves too slowly, the wrong signal is transmitted to the marketplace and the new Atari user who is absolutely essential to the survival of Tramiel & Sons. Atari, in it's actions, has supplied no clues as to how this marketing issue may be resolved - nor, quite frankly, will or should it be publicly divulged by Atari. Since I normally get paid for this type of analysis, I can assure you that the answers require more space than available, I will leave the solutions to the experts at Atari.

Finally, no matter what Atari does, it needs to get some new software out on the market. I am not referring to anything concerning the 16-bit ST or the G.E.M. system. We have heard about new enhanced 8-bit programs which have been engineered to greatly expand the capability of the 800 and 800XL. Existing users as well as the 700,000 new XL owners acquired by Atari over the past 6 months need a morale boost. Introduction of new software would say, hey we are for real - look at this! I hope they are on the market in April as initially promised.

In conclusion, it would seem that arrangements for user groups to make advanced special purchases (working through retail outlets if desirable) could strengthen Atari's marketing/sales efforts. This would benefit Atari in at least four ways: (1) build up general consumer confidence in Atari as a viable corporate entity; (2) the quality of the product could be quickly established; (3) quick cash inflow on initial production run; and (4) "word-of-mouth" user advertising would be promoted. The value of word-of-mouth advertising and good product reviews to a successful marketing strategy has been proven by survey after survey (Wall Steeet Journal, March 8, 1985). It's not the number of 16-bit ST's initially sold that is important, it's getting the machines to those that most influence first-time purchasers.

Nibblebits

- The **Print Shop** by Broderbund Software is out. I originally selected this progam as a best buy in the December issue of CURRENT NOTES. As you can guess it took Broderbund a little longer to ship the program than anticipated. I bought it in early March for the discounted price of $29.95. It is a terrific program and more than worth the modest cost. Within 5 minutes you can be using the program to print letterheads, signs, cards, etc. Excellent for small business applications. Again, I highly recommend the program.

- What's this! Apple computer is temporarily shutting down plants and PCjr. sales are off dramatically. Holy cow Batman! This is occurring at almost the same time the "experts" were telling us hordes of people have changed their preferences with regard to home computers (no longer want low-end computers - moving up to more bells and whistles). It appears Atari may have done better relatively over the past quarter than thought by those expert analyst.

Tips 'N Traps

Stevenson, Francese and Burke

Hello, adventure lovers. We come to the crossroads of puzzlement on another one of America's favorite adventures. So far, we have done pretty well. We have had a lot of submissions from some people, and we would like to get more. So we, the staff of Tips 'n' Traps, URGE you to go to that phone and call in your questions and/or solutions. This month's adventure is **Ghost Town** (A Scott Adams Adventure) which may or may not have been a hazard for some adventurers.

Feel free to call any of us at these phone numbers:

Jim Stevenson----------(703) 378-4093
Steve Francese----------(703) 830-2291
Alternate phone number:
Barry Burke----------(703) 830-1978

Or leave a message in the "Adventure Q&A" message conference in Novatari's board ARMUDIC (if it's up yet and you know the number).

And now, **Ghost Town.**

Q. How do I get in the jail?

A. Get your lucky object out.

Q. What do I do with the piano player?

A. Show him some respect and appreciate him.

Q. How do I break the mirror?

A. Look under the bed.

Q. What's a contrapositive?

A. Do the exact opposite.

Q. What do I do with the Chinese 'GO' board?

A. Pass on that one.

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Note: classified ads are free to WAACE members. Call the editor, Joe Waters, (703) 430-1215, on or before the 15th of the month to place your ad in the next month's issue of CURRENT NOTES.

ACTION! ACTION

by Jon Smith

Now that you've bought that beautiful orange ACTION cartridge, and you've read the manual, what do you do with it? In this month's ACTION! Action, we will present a simple BASIC program and translate it into ACTION to help you get into action. Program listing one is a simple number guessing game written in BASIC, while listing two is the translated ACTION code.

Translating BASIC to ACTION

One of the most obvious uses of ACTION is translating BASIC programs to ACTION for speed purposes. However, unlike some other languages, BASIC cannot be translated line by line into working ACTION code. In order to translate BASIC to ACTION, one must first fully understand the workings of the BASIC program.

Many beginning ACTION programmers are led to believe that ACTION programs need only one PROCedure. These programmers are acustommed to BASIC's "free-form" style. However, due to the lack of line numbers or GOTO statements in ACTION, many PROCedures or FUNCtions are usually required. As an example, just try translating any long BASIC program into a single ACTION PROCedure. This can be difficult - if not impossible.

Our number guessing game actually has more PROCedures than required. Some PROCedures could have been integrated, but many short PROCedures are better than a few long ones when it comes time to debug, modify, and add on to a program.

Translating BASIC programs to ACTION may seem tedious to some, but it should serve as an adequate challenge to adventurous novices. It could become a profitable pastime as well, since many magazines are interested in ACTION translations of previously published BASIC programs.

The Number Guessing Game.

The number guessing game in listings one and two are simple programs in which the user must guess a random number, somewhere between one and one hundred. The ACTION version consists of four PROCedures and two FUNCtions. The following paragraphs describe the general operation of this program.

The last PROCedure, "number_game" is the main program. First it calls "instructions". This prints the directions to playing the number guessing game.

Next, the main routine calls the "getname" PROCedure. This simply prompts the user for his or her name and stores it in the global character array "name".

The main PROCedure now sets the number of tries counter to zero, and creates the random number. Now comes the main program loop.

The FUNCtion "getguess" is called. This gets a number (1-100) from the user and returns it into the local variable "guess". The guess is then processed in the FUNCtion called "process_guess". If the guess is too high or too low, it notifies the user and returns a zero to the IF-THEN statement. If the user has guessed the correct number, it returns a one.

If the guess was incorrect, the main loop is repeated. Otherwise, the program jumps to "winner". "Winner" informs the user of his or her victory and how many guesses it required. It then asks the user if he or she wants to play another game. If so, the main PROCedure ("number_game") is re-run. If the user doesn't wish to play again, program execution is halted.

==========

Listing No. 1

```
10 DIM NAME$(100),AGAIN$(1)
20 GRAPHICS 0:? "Welcome to the number guessing game!"
30 ? "I'll think of a number between 1 and"
40 ? "100, and you can try to guess it!"
50 ? :? "What is your name";:INPUT NAME$
60 ? :? "Okay, ";NAME$;", let's begin!"
70 NUMBER=INT(RND(0)*100)+1
80 TRY=1
100 ? :? "This is try number ";TRY;", ";NAME$;"."
110 ? "What is your guess";
120 INPUT GUESS:IF GUESS>100 OR GUESS<1 THEN ? "Your guess
must be between 1 and 100.":GOTO 100
130 IF GUESS>NUMBER THEN ? :? "Sorry, too
high!":TRY=TRY+1:GOTO 100
140 IF GUESS<NUMBER THEN ? :? "Sorry, too
low!":TRY=TRY+1:GOTO 100
150 ? :? "You guessed my number in ";TRY;" tries!"
160 ? :? "Do you want to play again, ";NAME$;:INPUT
AGAIN$:IF AGAIN$="Y" THEN RUN
170 IF AGAIN$<>"N" THEN 160
180 ? :? "Okay, later!"
190 END
```

==========

Listing No. 2

```
CHAR ARRAY name(100)
BYTE try,number

PROC instructions()
  Graphics(0)
  PrintE("Welcome to the number guessing
  game!")
  PrintE("I'll think of a number between
  1 and")
```

```
  PrintE("100, and you can try to guess
  it!")
RETURN

PROC getname()
  PutE()
  Print("What is your name?")
  InputS(name)
RETURN

BYTE FUNC getguess()
BYTE guess
  DO
    try==+1
    PrintF("%E%S%B%S%E","This is try
    number ",try,".")
    Print("What is your guess?")
    guess=InputB()
    IF guess<101 AND guess>0 THEN
      RETURN (guess)
    FI
    PrintE("Your guess must be between 1
    and 100.")
  OD

BYTE FUNC process_guess(BYTE guess)
  IF guess>number THEN
    PutE()
    PrintE("Sorry, too high!")
    RETURN (0)
  FI
  IF guess<number THEN
    PutE()
    PrintE("Sorry, too low!")
    RETURN (0)
  FI
  RETURN (1)

PROC winner()
CHAR ARRAY again(1)
  PrintF("%E%S%B%S","You guessed my
  number in ",try," tries!")
  DO
    PrintF("%E%S%S%S","Do you want to
    play again, ",name,"?")
    InputS(again)
    IF again(1)='Y THEN
      RETURN
    FI
    IF again(1)='N THEN
      Break()
    FI
  OD
```

```
PROC number_game()
BYTE guess
  DO
    instructions()
    getname()
    try=0
    number=Rand(100)+1
    DO
      guess=getguess()
      IF process_guess(guess)=1 THEN
        EXIT
      FI
    OD
    winner()
  OD
RETURN
```

==========

Special request.

After last month's column, I recieved several phone calls. One of these was a request for an explanation of the ACTION PROCedure, "PrintF." So here it is folks, by special request, everything you always wanted to knov about "PrintF" but were afraid to ask!

The "PrintF" PROCedure allows a user to output more than one type of data at once with only one PROCedure call.

Suppose you wanted to duplicate the following BASIC code in ACTION:

```
10 PRINT "Var X = ";X;", and Y = ";Y;"."
```

Without the "PrintF" PROCedure, your ACTION would read as follows:

```
PROC example()
BYTE X,Y
  Print("Var X = ")
  PrintB(X)
  Print("and Y = ")
  PrintB(Y)
  PrintE(".")
```

A bit tedious, don't you agree?

The "PrintF" PROCedure allows you include all of this data on one line, through the use of a "control line." The PROCedure's first parameter is the control line, while the other elements depend on its contents. If the control line reads "%S%B%S", "PrintF" would expect the first parameter to be a string, the second a byte, and the third another string. The contol codes are listed in the table below.

Note that "%%" and "%E" require no parameters. These codes are listed on page 162 of the ACTION manual. Also note that "%B", output a BYTE, is not listed in the manual, but it does indeed work.

Code - Meaning:

```
%S  -  String
%I  -  INTeger
%B  -  BYTE
%U  -  Unsigned CARDinal
%C  -  CHARacter
%H  -  Unsigned Hexadecimal
%%  -  The "%" character
%E  -  An EOL <RETURN>
```

Our example program, using "PrintF", would read:

```
PROC example()
BYTE X,Y

 PrintF("%S%B%S%B%S%E","Var X =
",X," and  Y = ",Y,".")
```

Below is another example of the "PrintF" PROCedure.

```
PROC another_example()
PrintF("%S%H%%S%E","100% in
hexadecimal is $",100,".")
```

The output of this statement would be:

```
100% in hexadecimal is $64%.
```

Coming Attractions.

In the next few months, I will continue to answer your ACTION questions. I also have a few articles planned on more advanced ACTION, including an article on ACTION with machine language, and a sector-by-sector disk copying utility written entirely in (what else?) ACTION. If you've created an ACTION masterpiece and would like to see your program in print, contact me.

That's about it for this month's column. Don't forget to call me at (703) 437-8652 if you have ANY questions or comments about ACTION or this column.

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Musical Notes

by Jay Gerber

Every music package for the Atari computer has its strengths and weaknesses, and Electronic Arts' **Music Construction Set** (MCS) is no exception. However, I feel that its faults are relatively minor when compared to its overall performance.

MCS is a program which allows you to enter music, play it, and print it out in banner form on any printer. Basically, you have an endlessly scrolling staff upon which to place notes, rest, ties, or any other symbol of musical notation. You enter the notes by guiding a little hand around on the screen with a joystick, touch tablet, or keyboard arrows; and by placing them on the correct spot on the staff, create music.

You have two staves of which each can hold up to 700 musical symbols. The measures can hold quite a few notes, and can be in any of 4 time signatures: 2/4, 4/4, 6/8, or 3/4, which are the most common in music. To repeat certain measures, you can use a little 'Cut and Paste' option by placing a scissors on the first measure in a sequence to be repeated and pressing the number of measures in the sequence. Then you use a paste pot icon to relocate the sequence in the desired place.

After you finish the piece of music, you can do one of many things. First, you can hear the computer play it. Using the play option, the computer will play each note while you see it scrolled across the screen. You can adjust the speed/tempo of the music by pointing at a meter at the bottom of the screen. You can also alter the sound quality of the piece, also by a few meters. You can have it sound smooth, wavy, long, short, or even have it played like a drum. The volume of either staff can be varied to any level, also by a meter at the bottom of the screen.

Another option you have is to print out the music on any printer with dot-addressable graphics. By typing in a few printer codes, you can make a hard copy of the scrolling staves. The printout is relatively clear, but is printed in banner fashion, not in standard sheet form. It will normally be a few inches across, and as long as your piece lengthwise.

The reason I like to use MCS is its ease of use. It is sheer simplicity in design, and almost any child could learn to operate it without much trouble. All actions are chosen by moving a hand icon around with a joystick or touch tablet. When the hand is over your choice (also in icons), press the button, and that option works. Putting music on the staves is easy because every musical symbol is right there on the screen. You just pick it up with the hand and place it on the staves. That's really all there is to it. Some music theory (enough to get you started) is included in the well-written manual which accompanies the program.

As I mentioned before, all programs have their faults, and MCS has a few minor ones. First of all, it can hold only 700 symbols on each staff. Although this may at first sound like a lot, in practice, it gets used up quite quickly, especially with repeated measures and chords. Secondly, there are alot of symbols it cannot play, like triplets, dotted thirty-second notes, or accented notes. And the entire printing feature is not exactly a pleasure to use. Instead of selecting the print option and walking away, you have to push return after every two and one-half measures, because, I presume, that is all its buffer can handle. For long pieces this can be positively a pain. Also, once it's printed out, there is not much you can do with it, since it is in banner form which happens to waste quite a bit of paper.

Music Construction Set is by no means a tool for musicians to work with, but that is not its intention, either. MCS is perfect for people who know little or nothing about music theory or performance. You do not have to know one note of music to enjoy it. You can play various pieces of sheet music with ease. And you can just have fun placing notes in interesting patterns and hearing how they sound. All in all, Electronic Arts' **Music Construction Set** is the perfect musical connection between the computer and the beginner in music.

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ATARI Bulletin Board Systems in DC and Northern Virginia

by Jim Stevenson

(Updated as of March 7, 1985)

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Best Little BBS	703-550-8119
Broken Board BBS	703-378-5076
Castle Wolfenstein BBS	703-243-4238
Clubhouse BBS	703-978-3516
Cover's Cave BBS	703-451-0297
Electronic Age BBS	703-620-0851
Final Frontier BBS	202-362-8984
Graveyard BBS	202-396-4137
Luna City BBS	703-455-9248
Max Moss Hotline	703-683-3944
Merlin's Litterbox BBS	703-250-7303
Mos Eisley BBS	703-620-2784
Outer Limits BBS	703-922-9131
Padded Room BBS	703-455-2697
Pyramid BBS	703-354-7394
Red Caboose BBS	703-620-5309
Sanctuary BBS	703-455-1439
Treasure Island BBS	202-483-8317

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[Virginia calls may be long distance for some Maryland readers. If someone from Maryland would care to submit some BBS numbers local to the Maryland, we will expand this list next month. Ed.]

Going Online

by Ed Seward

Before I start on this month's topic, I would like to cover a few points. First, just to warn you, the only modem I have used so far is an 835 or 1030 modem. However, I plan to make this column helpful to as many people as possible. Second, if someone has trouble getting started with their new modem or terminal software, feel free to get in touch with me and I'll try to help you.

While I'm on that subject let me present a few answers to questions I've been asked. When one is using an MPP modem to communicate with a 1030 modem then the baud rate of the MPP needs to be set at 295. This is due to 300 on the MPP actually being 304 which is too fast for the 1030. Also, for those of you using DOS 3, let me warn you that AMODEM and most if not all other terminal software will not work properly with DOS 3. The easiest (cheapest) solution is to get a copy of ATARI DOS 2.0S if you don't already have one. Most ANTIC disks come with both portions of that DOS on them and Joe Waters covered it in last month's CURRENT NOTES.

Now for this month's topic, a review of the HOMETERM portion of HOMEPAK.

HOMETERM

by Batteries Included

As packaged HOMETERM comes ready to work with 835/1030 modems and 850 based modems. If you own an MPP 1000 you will need an R: handler that is on Compuserve as HMDRIVE.XMO. It should be on ARMUDIC shortly after the board comes back up. Instructions are in the HOMETERM manual for setting up HOMETERM for use with an MPP modem.

There are four groups or levels of commands within the program: Function Menu, Disk Files Menu, interactive screen and macro commands. As there are fifty commands, I am only going to cover those commands or features which are not found in most terminal programs or otherwise enhance this program.

Seven of the commands available in the interactive screen mode (the screen you'd normally see or use while online) allow one to: change the screen and text brightness, change the screen color, toggle the word wrap on and off, start and stop the clock display, list the macros on the screen, and send or activate a macro.

In the case of HOMETERM, a macro is a stored string of up to 70 characters. One can have a maximum of ten macros. The strings can contain commands such that by activating one macro you can dial the number and send the logon information all by pushing three keys. There are numerous other uses for the macros. However, there are two problems with the macros that I know of. One is that the macros cannot be used to dial an 835 or 1030 modem. The other problem is that an ATASCII End-Of-Line (EOL) character in a macro is transmitted as an ASCII EOL. This is not a problem when not using macros, but one must work around it logging on to an ATARI BBS when you want the board to be in ATASCII mode.

Since HOMETERM comes on an unprotected disk and since it allows you to save your current configuration (macros, screen color and brightness, translation, baud, etc.) you can set up several self-booting HOMETERM disks - each with its own macros and a different configuration. Alternatively, you can have several different configurations on one disk. One thing I didn't try is to load a configuration file while online.

Before I go on to the other commands, I would like to mention that HOMETERM uses three different display locations in memory so one can picture this as three full screen windows. There is one for each menu and one for the interactive screen. Thus, by pausing what is being received and then going to the Function Menu and then returning, one will find that the interactive screen is exactly as it was before going to the menu. This is especially nice when you want to check a disk's directory which in AMODEM would scroll quite a bit of information off the top of the screen.

Upon viewing the Function Menu, one will find the usual commands such as capture, Xmodem receive and send plus a few others. Among the other commands is one to load a different configuration file so that you reconfigure HOMETERM without rebooting it. The other distintive command in this menu is the one to goto the Disk Files Menu.

The Disk Files Menu gives one some of the important DOS commands like: copy a file, delete a file, lock and unlock a file, rename a file and format a disk. Both menus allow one to list a disk's directory.

In using HOMETERM I've run into three minor nuisances besides the inability to use the macros to autodial with an 835 or 1030. One is that the block counter for uploads and downloads is defined as a byte in the ACTION! language and thus hangs the system on block 256. This means one must use the none Xmodem protocal to send or receive any large file. This method is not wise for anything that should be done with error checking. The second problem occurs when signing onto an Atari BBS. Most bulletin boards have some cursor art display when a person signs on; with HOMETERM all these cursor control characters are displayed instead of their moving the cursor. The third thing I didn't like was the lack of auto-redial. A problem found by someone else using a 1030 modem is that pressing the [SELECT] key while the modem is dialing will result in your computer hanging the next time the disk is accessed. I have not seen any mention of those dialing problems with any other modem such as the MPP.

Another version of HOMETERM is supposed to be released in a few months to correct the macro dialing problem with the 1030 modems and the problem with cursor positioning on Atari BBS'. The current version (designated ver 3.3.3) has three translations: ASCII, ATASCII and Vidtex for Compuserve. The next version is rumored to have these plus several terminal emulators. The new version is

(Continued on Page 16)

BATTLE BYTES

by M. Evan Brooks

Computer Ambush

I would like to preface this review with an explanation. Last month, I stated that "NATO Commander" would be the subject for this month's review. However, during the interim, SSI was kind enough to send a preview copy of their latest release. Because of the recent release, I have therefore shifted gears and will review "Computer Ambush" herein.

The first thing to note about "Computer Ambush" is that it is a wargame from SSI (Strategic Simulations, Inc.). SSI is the class act of the computer wargaming field; they are to computer wargames in the 1980s what Avalon Hill was to board wargamers in the 1960s (while Avalon Hill's computer games of the 1980s are more comparable to Rand Games of the 1970s; the cognoscenti will know whereof I speak). This is not to say that SSI is perfect; virtually all of their designs are lifted from the board game genre without giving credit to the initiators. However, because of their consistent output, SSI may be forgiven.

Are you tired of being called a REMF? Do Charles Atlas types kick sand in your face? Do you still read SGT Rock? Then "Computer Ambush" may be your escape into a world of violence and mayhem. "Computer Ambush" is a complex and detailed game covering man-to-man combat operations in urban terrain during World War II. This game is for the advanced gamer! I have certain reservations concerning the accuracy inherent in a game on this level; while statistics will tend to average out in a divisional level game, I do not think that this is true on the man-to-man level (one can reasonably predict what 10,000 men will do as an entity; a prediction of what one man will do is much harder). The board game has offered two classic treatments of this level of fighting: Avalon Hill's "Squad Leader", the more popular treatment, works in squad and half squads; SPI's "Sniper" works on the man-to-man level. There is no question of "Computer Ambush"'s parentage -- the resemblance to "Sniper" even carries over to the map.

"Computer Ambush" offers several advantages over the board version, while it suffers from numerous disadvantages as well. I will cover both aspects, and let the reader decide for himself.

Advantages

1 -- You may input the length of the turn -- covering anywhere from .1 seconds to 25 seconds. This flexiblity allows you maximum leeway; when the action is fast and furious, you may shorten the turns to enable quick reaction; before contact is initiated, you may permit longer turns. I recommend a turn length of 10 seconds; it is short enough to cause a quick reaction, and not so quick that nothing gets done.

2 -- Opportunity fire is handled by the computer in a facile and realistic method. In the board version, one simply gave orders to fire if an enemy unit crossed the line of fire; in "Computer Ambush", you may give orders to withhold fire until a certain %age of success is assured (e.g. fire to a secific hex only if the chance of hitting the target is greater than 50%).

3 -- When the turn is completed, you may review the action in a virtual movie format, and if you missed an action, you may replay the "movie" over and over until you catch up on all the action.

Disadvantages

1 -- The program runs 40 times faster than its prior edition. Great news; however, if this edition runs 40 times faster, then the older edition (Apple only) must have taken days to play seconds. The computer (Otto von Computer, the Crafty Feldwebel [i.e. Sergeant; please protect us from the cutesy touches]) takes an interminable period to respond. Time periods are broken down into virtual nanoseconds, but the delay becomes tedious.

2 -- The graphics are disappointing; although each character is given a name and biography (seemingly taken from a World War II propaganda film), it is difficult to get overly emotionally attached to your people, particularly the Germans (in a 2-player game). Even more important, your people are represented on the screen by the first letter of their last names; if SGT Padooka is told to run across the street, then you will notice the letter "P" making that run. Unless you are enthralled by Sesame Street, the moving letters are difficult to empathize with. Even more important, in watching the action of a turn, the Germans are represented by swastikas. When they move, they leave a trail of swastikas (similarly, you leave a trail of letters, i.e. "P"s moving up the street). However, since you know who "P" is (e.g. SGT Padooka), you have a grasp of the situation. When you see 7 swastikas blossom into 40, it is impossible to tell which German went where and in what strength. This sometimes leads into awkward and unrealistic assumptions and actions. Then again, perhaps it is the "Panic" rule, so common to board gamers whereby idiocy becomes deus ex machina.

3 -- Unlike "Sniper", "Computer Ambush" has few options. Weapons sytems and frills are limited; there are no tanks or vehicles -- even more important, there is no height. The European village consists of all one-story buildings; while I realize that programming space may have prohibited this frill, it was sorely missed.

4 -- The game offers sound vs. silent play. However, my copy of "Computer Ambush" was always silent. Battle sounds were unable to be implemented. Even more important, in certain scenarios (particularly Infiltration), the program had a tendency to crash -- Otto von Computer would take so long planning his move that it finally became obvious that the program had crashed. The solution: frequent saves of your playing position. Still an inconvience!

Playing the Game

The instructions are detailed -- virtually stultifying at first glance. However, do not despair; many of the movement and action orders will be used rarely. For example, using a garotte, a knife, or initiating hand-to-hand combat should be reserved for the truly desperate (remember the scene in "Raiders of the Lost Ark" where Indiana Jones simply shot the swordsman who was impressing the crowd? Here, remember that an MI will normally beat a strip of wire and act accordingly). Thus, the most important orders are those of movement and firing. Remember principles of combat in urban terrain. The weapon of choice in urban terrain is the hand grenade; you are limited in your supply, but they must be used judiciously and often. Area fire, while not as accurate as aimed fire, is more expedient.

There are two classic texts on this type of fighting: "Combat in Cities Report", Vol. I-III (US Army Infantry School, 1972) and FM 90-10-1 ("An Infantryman's Guide to Urban Combat", 1982). Both texts offer more tactical hints than I ever could; the former is based upon World War II experiences (which is also the subject of "Computer Ambush"); the latter is a virtual how-to book.

In "Computer Ambush", you may design your own scenarios. But for the gamer in a hurry, 5 solitaire and 6 2-player scenarios are provided. These are as follows: NCO training (a good beginning), Ambush, Infiltration (the opposite of Ambush), Raid and Barn Defense for solitaire; Ambush, Patrol, Strongpoint, Church Defense, Seek & Destroy and Alley Fight in the 2-player versions. I have only experimented with the solitaire versions. The computer may play at 3 levels: rookie, Wehrmacht, and Waffen SS (the last being impossible to beat unless you have the tactical ability of Audie Murphy coupled with the luck of John Wayne).

In order to win, remember the victory conditions. If destruction of a building is the key, do not get sidetracked into the annihilation of the enemy without accomplishment of the primary mission. Also, be careful of your people. If you must utilize plastic explosives, only your explosives expert (and to a lesser degree, your squad leader) may emplace them. Lose the experts and the game is lost! So remember to examine the victory conditions.

In an ambush situation, do not open fire before the bulk of the enemy is in the kill zone. Thus, in using opportunity fire, keep the %ages high enough to prevent premature disclosure of the ambush. Also, in an ambush, use both fire and grenades; in fact, use grenades whenever and wherever the enemy is known to be; they are very effective. You would normally utilize grenades in an attempt to ferret out enemy locations. In "Computer Ambush", you do not have the luxury of resupply; be careful with your grenades.

In infiltration or a raid, utilize a bounding overwatch type of movement, i.e. have Soldier A move while Soldier B covers him; then have Soldier B move up to and beyond the furthest penetration while Soldier A provides cover. Remember, do not bunch up; having a single grenade take out many personnel is inexcuseable. At the same time, do not get so overextended that your people cannot provide mutual support. Common sense has to comply with the tactical mission and the terrain.

Detailed hints cannot be given for a tactical game because of its inherent nature. The action is so intense and individualistic that most games bear little resemblance from play to play.

The program comes with an acetate reproduction of the map and green crayons for plotting your moves beforehand. The experienced wargamer should not need this, and it may prove too confusing to the neophyte. You may plot your moves on the computer while looking at the screen map (simply input the bottom hexrow of vision). After your first few plays, this will become second nature.

Conclusion

Is this game essential for your library? It depends on your interest -- if low-level tactical wargaming is your specialty, then "Computer Ambush" will fill a niche nicely. On the other hand, if your interests are more in the operational and strategic spheres, then "Computer Ambush" may simply be too down and dirty for you. As we have come to expect from SSI, games may be saved in midstream (being able to format and initilize a disk in midplay is a great convenience). After playing for awhile, you tend to ignore the graphics; the letters no longer seem so trivial. The sweating begins ...

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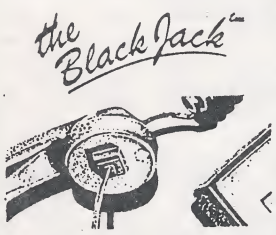

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GAMEVIEWS

by Roland Gabeler

Spy vs Spy

To Spy or not to Spy, that is the question...? This old, somewhat misquoted line, points out a basic difference in methods of play for the Spy vs Spy game from First Star Software. If you choose to spy on the actions of your opponent, you would lose time in searching out the required items to win the game. If, however, you choose to ignore your opponent to search, you most likely will find some traps you didn't notice him setting! If all of this sounds rather complex, welcome to the world of counter-espionage, Mad magazine style.

This game is somewhat complex at the first reading of the twelve-page instruction manual. But, read it a second time, after carefully watching the demo mode three or four times, and you'll begin to understand the rules and appreciate the value of the complexities. After playing the game several times, the rules will no longer puzzle you at all.

Okay, if you're ready, now you will race through the embassy setting traps, watching where your opponent set traps, fighting, and gathering your four items into a briefcase. Having accomplished that task, you have to locate a door with the picture of an airplane on it, and exit the embassy. The disk will load a picture of an airport, and your spy will automatically board a plane and fly off the screen to victory!

This game features a horizontally split screen, with each player's Spy searching rooms of an embassy for four items with which to escape. The required treasures are a passport, a key (to the escape door), traveling money, and the secret plans. Your half of the screen shows the room you are currently in and your "trapulator" box to the right of your screen. The room is detailed in three dimensions and contains various items such as furniture, pictures, rugs, etc. Certain rooms contain "remedies" to counter the effect of traps.

Traps are selected from your trapulator in limited quantities, according to the level you are playing. Pressing your joystick button activates an arrow icon in the trapulator, with which you may select either one of five traps, or a map of the embassy. After selecting a trap, you are required to hide it behind furniture or rigged to a door. The traps are a bomb, a spring, a water bucket, a gun on a string and a time bomb. Each trap, with one exception, has a "remedy" to prevent it from harming you, if you happen to have the right remedy for the right trap!! The time bomb has no remedy, it simply blows up when 15 seconds have expired. Three other features of the trapulator are an inventory strip to keep track of your required booty, a timer, (drats...I hate timers!!!) and a warning indicator that turns red when you are about to run out of time.

Time, it turns out, is as great an enemy as your opponent. The computer subtacts increments of "penalty" time each time you use a trap, read a map or "die" as a result of a trap or fight (more on fights later). The amount of time with which you have to play, depends on the level of play selected at the start of the game. When you run out of time you are out of the game, relegated to watching your opponent attempt to win it alone before his time runs out.

To further enhance the interactivity of the game, you may enter the same room in which your opponent is searching and "fight" him to the death for the items he has located, or just to slow him down with another time penalty. At the time you both are in the same room, the intruder's screen goes blank as he appears in the opponent's screen. Both Spies lose any items they are carrying, but everything (from the winner and loser of the fight) can then be found behind furniture in that room. This twist leads to a strategy of alloving your opponent to locate all the missing items, then kill him and escape to win the game. However, the fight is carried out using the joystick to jab in the stomach (left, right movement), or club (hit over the head with up and down movement) your opponent. This becomes a learned skill, but is an all or nothing gamble if done in the aforementioned strategy. If you play against the computer, you will be doggedly attacked with fight after fight.

This is a superbly animated cartoon game but definitely not "child's play". This review, if nothing else, should have convinced you that there is a lot of effort and strategy required to successfully complete this game. But, after learning the gameplay techniques, the game is certainly not difficult. The work is involved in trying to keep track of your objectives while watching what your opponent is doing. After playing the game a few times, I needed a break from the intense concentration required to remain competitive.

Before rendering my verdict on this game, I must admit a prejudice in favor of well-designed interactive two-person games. Therefore, I love playing this game with a friend, but not against the computer. The game is currently selling for about $23.00 and is often found in the Commodore software section of local stores, since it is a dual system disk. I believe this game to be well worth the money, if, you have a partner to play against.

Gambling

Game Disk #2 in the NOVATARI collection is titled "Gambling". This disk contains five games with graphics ranging from fair to very nice and complexity in gameplay ranging from none to fairly complex. I will not detail how to play these games, but rather how well these translations relate to reasonable recreational value. Again, as mentioned last month, the price on this disk is $3.00, and it would be difficult not to get that much value for your money. But, public domain games are often not "state of the art" and could waste your time, if not your money, by boring you with their gameplay.

Black Jack is the first game. This translation is simple in graphics, featuring a black screen with nicely drawn cards. You are allowed to "Double Down" (increase

your bet after seeing your cards). This game plays well, but the computer is no slouch and sometimes "appears" to have an unusual edge...?

Five Card Stud is next on the disk. This game has good graphics and plays smoothly. You are required to bet after two of five cards are dealt. Maybe I'm jaded or a lousy gambler, but the computer seems to play very well in this game also. Perhaps some of you "Expert" poker players will provide a greater challenge to the computer.

Gambler, the third game on the disk, is a potourri of several games rolled into one. Up to four players can participate at one time, but I doubt they will want to. This game has graphics that can best be described as "fair". A random game selector that you trigger but not control, selects which game you play. You may also buy lottery tickets for a lottery that may (or may not) be held if the "selector" points to a lottery. Gambler is ineresting for one or two players and appears not to cheat you in the one player. Most likely, you'll get a couple of plays out of it, but it won't rank high on your list.

Jackpot is a simple one-armed bandit game. The graphics are pretty good, but I fail to be entertained by something that requires little, if any, intelligence, and no real strategy to win or lose. If you like the real "bandits", you may enjoy this version. If not, move quickly to the last game; it's worth the price of admission.

Poker Square. Okay folks, this is truly a case of saving the best for last. I enjoy a game that requires thought and strategy, even if it is tempered by the "luck of the draw". Poker Square provides a great combination of very fine graphics and an adjustable level of difficulty to provide a well-paced game of card arrangement. This game requires you to accept the drawn card and place it in an arrangement of horizontal and vertical rows and columns, forming the best poker hands when all cards are dealt. A joystick selects where you wish to place each card as you build your ideal hands. That is similar to other games, but, in this version, other players are dealt the same cards and play them in turn. You may also set a timer for each player, thereby providing an ability to handicap the better player. At the completion of the game, the computer adds up the value of the rows and columns, and issues a final score. While I am not a poker player, I really enjoy playing this game. I set plenty of time for my turns and enjoy the placement strategies.

Game Disk #2 is worth $10 in entertainment value at $3.00 cost. If you enjoy gambling games and especially the "placement" game of Poker Square, don't miss adding this disk to your collection. If you cannot locate these games in your club's library, they are available mail-order through NOVATARI. [*See NOVATARI club news section. Ed.*] Your views and comments are welcome on these or any games. Call: Roland Gabeler, in Reston, Va. (703) 620-9142.

NEW PRODUCTS

by Jack Holtzhauer

This is the first in a periodic series of articles reporting the actual appearance on dealer's shelves of products advertised for the ATARI computer. Except where noted, descriptions and claims will be those provided by the manufacture . Prices are those available at L&Y Electronics (see advertisement elsewhere in this issue), do not include an additional 5% discount on software products for users' group members (except on special sale items), and may not apply elsewhere. If any reader stumbles across a product felt to be worthy of mention, give me a call on 703-670-6475 and we'll include it in the next column.

The PRINT SHOP

Broderbund Software

Broderbund claims this double-sided disk package will "turn your personal computer into a personal printshop" allowing you to produce greeting cards, letterheads, advertising flyers, banners, etc. The package contains everything you might need - - nine different border designs, eight typestyles in three different fonts, ten background designs and a wide range of picture and symbol graphics, all of which may be intermixed to produce your design. Also included is an easy to use graphics editor which allows you to create your own graphics or to modify the ready-to-use graphics supplied with the package. A special feature is the "Screen Magic" functions which allows you to freeze Kaleidoscopic patterns to create an endless variety of geometric designs. For whatever it's worth, I've purchased this program and it's well worth the price of $34.99. [Reviewed in this issue of CURRENT NOTES.]

TRACK AND FIELD

ATARI CORP.

This new ATARI CORP. computer cartridge program, the official home video game of the 1984 Summer Olympics, includes a special game controller and features six events - the 100 yeard dash, long jump, javelin throw, 100 meter hurdles, hammer throw and high jump. This two-player game (against the computer or an opponent) allows you to "warm-up" before actually competing, and requires you to earn a qualifying score before proceeding to the next event. The computer version does not have the three-level-difficulty option included with the 2600 VCS version. With a suggested list of $47.95, it is priced at $29.99.

MILLIPEDE

ATARI CORP.

This new computer version of an old VCS game rates a full page add in the February edition of ATARI's new magazine "THE ATARI EXPLORER", and a review therein authored by Myrna Rae Johnson. Myrna says "MILLIPEDE can best be described as a hyperactive version of CENTIPEDE. There are more jeepers, creepers, blying bugs, and

scuttling critters scampering about the screen adding to the excitement. . ." Who knows? Priced at $29.99.

ATARILAB STARTER SET
ATARI CORP

This product, the first of the ATARILAB modules, has been on the shelf for a couple of months and includes the ATARILAB interface required with the other products in this line. Also included is an electronic thermometer, a standard bulb thermometer, a 16K software cartridge and a manual detailing a number of temperature related experiments. Priced at $49.99.

ATARILAB LIGHT MODULE
ATARI CORP.

The second product in the ATARILAB line, this package allows the user to "plug light sensors into the interface and study the relation of light and temperature, measure the output from lamps, the TV set, the sun. Even discover the effect of light on bacterial growth . . ." Light sensor, assembly, stand, polarizer, filters and analyzer wheel included. Requires the ATARILAB starter set. priced at $39.99.

BOUNTY BOB STRIKES BACK
BIG 5 SOFTWARE

This 40K ROM-based game is touted as a sequel to the infamous "MINER 2049ER". It was reviewed in one of the other users' group newsletters and identified as a "can't miss" buy for the veteran gamer. The reviewer, who claims he's pretty good at this kinda thing, complains he can't get past level 12 in this 20-odd level scenario. Priced at $39.99.

SERIAL PRINTER INTERFACE
R-VERTER

The MODEL P printer interface from R-VERTER permits the marriage of ATARI computers with RS-232C typewriter/printers, such as Brothers, etc. Priced at $49.99.

USDOUBLER/SPARTA DOS
ICD, INC.

This package contains two IC's which will convert your 1050 drive to true double density. Installation on some 1050's is very straight forward (remove two of the stock IC's and plug in replacements - - it took me less that 20 minutes), but might require some trace cutting on other versions of the 1050. Conversion instructions are generally clear and concise, but at least one experienced service techinician with whom I'm familiar had to call the manufacturer regarding one trace-cutting situation. Priced at $59.99 - $69.99 installed.

The conversion kit comes with SPARTA DOS, another ICD, Inc., product. This is a pretty nifty system, but will not function with programs requiring ATARI DOS 2.0 compatibility. Like TOPDOS and some others now on the market, SPARTA DOS does not use sector-linking bytes and uses a different system for its sector allocation and disk directory functions. Special features include the ability to create sub-directories and an "UltraSpeed" formatting system which increases I/O by as much as 60%. And, unlike TOPDOS, SPARTA DOS allows you to convert your files back to the ATARI DOS 2.0 format, should you desire to do so.

KNOW YOUR ATARI - NEW XL EDITION
BY POOLE, MCNIFF & COOK, OSBORNE/MCGRAW-HILL

This is a new edition of Poole, et al's book on the ATARI computer originally published in 1982. It's been updated to include data on the XL computer line. It covers everything from BASIC programming to peripheral usage. As far as I'm concerned, if you can afford only one book on the ATARI computer system, this one is the one to buy. Priced at $16.95.

COMPUTE!'S ATARI COLLECTION VOL 1
COMPUTE! MAGAZINE

A new book from the publishers of COMPUTE! magazine featuring "30 never-before-published original" programs for the ATARI. The programs range from games to tape and disk utilities. Priced at $12.95.

OKIMATE 10 COLOR PRINTER
OKIDATA

This printer lets you print graphics "in a rainbow of 36 dazzling colors" and offers word-processing at a "speed" of 140 words per minute. The package includes an interface module, a "PLUG'N PRINT" control cartridge, "Learn-to-Print" program, a "Color Screen Print" software package, computer paper and an "easy to read handbook". Listed at $238, it is priced at $199.

Going Online (Continued from Page 11)

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supposed to be made available to all those who have sent in their warranty cards. (The information on the next verson of HOMETERM is in a Compuserve file written by Henry T. Colonna.)

In the three months I've had HOMEPAK, HOMETERM has come to be the terminal program I prefer to use and use almost exclusively. True, it has several faults, but it's capabilities and ease of use make it a great terminal program.

If you need help with your online problems, feel free to contact me. My address and phone number are: Ed Seward, P O BOX 6826, Alexandria, VA 22306 (703)960-6360.

Ronald L. Rasmus — Commercial Auctioneers — Alexandria, Virginia

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CPM	EASY WRITER	D BASE	BSTAM	HUMANSOFT DB +	VISI PLOT	COMMODORE 64	PEACHWARE	IBM
MAGIC WAND	ACT	XEROX	DATASTAR	HAYDEN	DOW JONES	MICROPRO	BABY BLUE	WANG
GENERAL LEDGER	L & W	TELIVIDEO	DYSAN	GREAT PLAINS	NEC	WORD PERFECT	MICROSOFT	BURROUGHS
ATARI SOFT	PERFECT CALC	OSBORNE	EAGLE	MULTI-PLAN	PILOT	ROSESOFT	QUADRAM	BUFFERS
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GEM SEMINAR REPORT

by Nat Friedland
ANTIC Editor

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First of all, Atari still considers itself to be on schedule for bringing the first production ST computers onto the market in April. Full ST production capacity won't be reached until June.

The 10-15 megabyte hard disk for the ST will show up in the summer. This is essentially the same schedule Antic reported at the January Consumer Electronics show. What's significant NOW is that none of the normal debugging problems associated with new machines are expected by Atari to hold up the ST significantly.

ATARI CAD/CAM -- UNDER $2000?. Remember the legend-shrouded 32-bit Atari we reported that Jack Tramiel talked about at his November press conference? Well, it hasn't drifted off to Computer Wish Heaven. Every time an Atari engineer talked about the 32-bit computer in Monterey, a delighted smile appeared on his face. The computer was described to Antic as a "VAX minicomputer on a chip" and a "40,000 CAD/CAM computer graphics workstation that will sell for under $2,000. And Atari still hopes to meet Jack's stated goal of unveiling this machine at the April electronics fair in Hanover, Germany.

ADVANCE ST COPIES. Antic has signed up to purchase one of the first pre-production prototypes of the ST. It's supposed to be available at the beginning of March. These prototypes are being hand-wired and Atari says they will be sold at whatever is the final break-even price. The next batch of advance ST units will be "editors' review packages" that are supposed to ship at the end of March or the beginning of April. After that, the availability of STs depends on whether or not a store near you signs to get one of the first allocations.

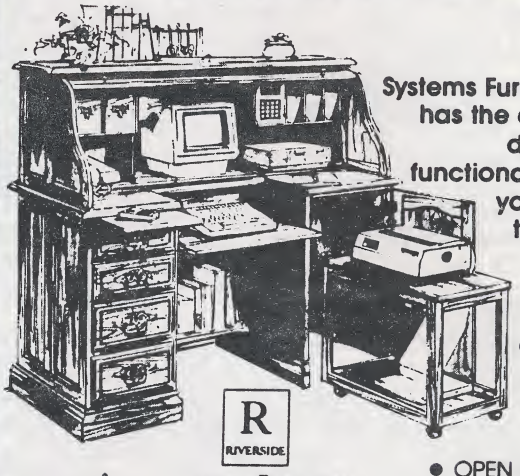
ATARI ACCEPTANCE. As for the GEM Seminar itself, the $800 Feb. 14-15 workshop was highly technical and directed at professional consumer-software programmers who were thoroughly experienced with the C language or with Macintosh window program development. Interestingly, within this sophisticated and hard-nosed environment, the name Atari was mentioned often and each time it was treated with respect as a credible factor in the softwared marketplace. This certainly would not have been the case less than a year ago.

At a well-attended evening reception there was available for hands-on examination a working ST with a preliminary version of Atari GEM burned into ROM as an EPROM. Before you could handle the ST, you had to sign a confidentiality pledge which also gave you a very sketchy early draft of the official Atari software development documentation, and official status on the list of certified Atari software developers. There was a long line waiting to sign and most of the Seminar's 200 attendees did commit to develop ST software.

LEARNING ABOUT GEM. The Seminar sessions were taken up with highly detailed discussions of GEM development nuts and bolts such as the strict interfacing procedures which are supposed to make porting GEM-based programs between different computers a routinely mechanical one-day process. Of course, the main selling point of GEM is that it's supposed to make it simple to convert software between the IBM PC and its clones, the Macintosh, the Atari ST and any other computer the GEM licenses a version for.

Access to GEM windows, debugging, and correct embedding of transfer hooks were among the other technical topics discussed. All attendees were given the two-volume GEM Toolkit documentation. DRI's recommended professional development language was Lattice C, which costs around $500. For those who don't realize this, it should be noted that the Seminar was specifically dealing with the just-completed IBM PC version of GEM. Six-disk beta test editions of GEM were being sold to developers by DRI for $500. The GEM Library software of prepared graphics routines cost extra.

FUNCTIONAL COMPUTER WORKCENTER



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ATARI Execs Meet User Group

by Michael Ciraolo, Antic Associate Editor

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SAN LEANDRO, CA.-- A panel of eight Atari executives headed by AtariSoft president Sig Hartmann demonstrated production units of the new XE and ST computers at the San Leandro Computer Club on March 5 and pledged that the powerful new machines will be on retail shelves in April.

According to research and development vice president Shiraz Shivji, the new 16-bit ST computers will be shipped with Logo, but users will have to buy BASIC separately. However, other Atari spokesmen later told Antic privately that the decision not to include BASIC may still be changed.

Atari has also postponed plans to produce an 8-bit portable computer, due to lack of interest. Instead there will be a 16-bit portable ST. Also, plans for an XEM 8-bit music computer have been postponed indefinitely due to problems with finalizing the AMY sound chip.

Shivji and John Feagans, who is responsible for the 16-bit computer's operating system, held the audience spellbound as they demonstrated the incredibly fast color window/icon/mouse abilities of the ST -- dubbed the "Jackintosh" for its resemblance to Apple's Macintosh. Feagans and Shivji also wowed the computer club by displaying the entire palette of 512 colors simultaneously on the ST.

"It's taken seven or eight months to develop, but it's real! The plastic is real! We're doing everything we can to get you the STs," Hartmann said. "We believe it's faster than the IBM AT," Shivji said. "I think this'll be one of the sweetest machines for hackers."

Shivji said the chips in the new computers are soldered, not socketed. He encouraged expansion of the STs through the Direct Memory Access port, which he said transfers data at 10 megabits per second. He also said the largest ROM cartridge the STs can accept is 128K.

Hartmann presented much of the standard New Atari rhetoric. "We want a lot closer ties to user groups. We're interested in better communications, helping fix problems and hearing criticism," he told the audience of 200.

In an unprecedented display of corporate openness, Hartmann was joined by the software product manager for the XEs, the product manager for the STs, the head of ST OS/GEM development, Atari's general counsel, and the vice presidents of finance and research and development, and the editor of the Atari Explorer. The entire group answered questions for over two hours.

Atari is currently selling a professional development package for the 16-bit computers, said Hartmann. For $4,500, a developer will receive an ST computer, an RGB color monitor and a high resolution monochrome monitor, two 3.5-inch disk drives and C tools, including a compiler, linker, loader, assembler, debugger, editor, uploader/downloader and full technical specifications.

Atari is also seeking qualified people to write and test software for the new 8-bit XE machines, according to Hartmann. "The 8-bit line is still alive and well. All new software will run on the 800XL and 65XE, but will automatically look for and use the extra 64K RAM in the 130XE," said John Skruch, software product manager for the 8-bit line. "Private software developers are already writing for the XEs. Hayden Software is converting Sargon III, the chess program," Skruch said.

Richard Fricke said he expects to have 25 to 30 software packages on sale when the STs are released in April. Fricke, Hartmann's second-in-command, also promised that the XEs are more solid than the 800XL. "If you lift your 800XL one foot above a table and drop it -- gently -- you'd probably lose an AtariWriter file. That won't happen with the XEs."

Although Atari chairman Jack Tramiel previously said he would sell no software for over $49, Hartmann now said that no software would cost more than $100, but most Atari software would still retail below $50.

Those packages will include home productivity, business, education and entertainment software, in order of importance to the new Atari Corp, Fricke said.

At the April computer fair in Hanover, Germany, Jack Tramiel will announce a true 32-bit microcomputer, and will also demonstrate the Local Area Network capability of the 8-bit and 16-bit Ataris, according to Hartmann.

Using the Infinity integrated software package from Matrix Systems, the XEs and STs will support up to 255 Atari terminals linked in a LAN through joystick ports, said Fricke.

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BASIC-XL SIG To Meet In April.

by Terry White

A preliminary meeting of the BASIC-XL SIG will be held on April 14 at 5:30 PM (at the beginning of the regular NOVATARI meeting). There we will meet one another and exchange name/address lists, etc.

The next meeting is planned for April 25th, from 7:00 PM to 9:00 PM. This will be held at the Vienna public library meeting room. Their address is 101 Maple Avenue. There, we will talk about such things as; (1) documenting every program we encounter that should be compatible but isn't and why, (2) publish programs that show the ease of using those great new four dozen commands and how they can actually save memory at the same time!, and (3) put together disks of BASIC-XL programs for others to enjoy.

SYNSTOCK

By SYNAPSE, Disk, $39.95

Reviewed By Al Rauchut

SYNSTOCK is another program in the Synapse line of software developed exclusively for the ATARI. SYNSTOCK is a "MENU driven personal stock charting package." It allows you to store daily stock price quotes, to create stock price charts, and to analyze stock price history and trends. You can create stock price data files by entering daily stock quotes from your local newspaper or by downloading stock quotes via your modem from Microquote, a stock quote reference database accessible through COMPUSERVE. SYNSTOCK consists of a single program-disk requiring 48k memory and BASIC. Its 74 pages of documentation come in a three-ring binder packaged in the typical Synapse "Syn" series carton.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW: SYNSTOCK produces high resolution stock price charts that can be displayed on your monitor's screen or reproduced on a bit-graphic capable printer (the printed version of the charts are not as pretty as the screen version). SYNSTOCK fully supports the C. Itoh 8510a, NEC 8023, Star Gemini, and Epson FX/MX-80 graf-trax printers. Synapse claims that other printers may be used but there is no guarantee the charts will be printed properly. The SYNSTOCK charts show the daily highs, lows, closing prices, and volume activities. SYNSTOCK also performs several technical analysis functions. You can plot up to two moving averages of price and can include an oscillator for additional comparisons.

SYNSTOCK can be used with two disk drives. Data files can be on more than one data disk also. If you are currently using ATARI's "Stock Charting System" program you won't have to start your files over again if you buy SYNSTOCK. SYNSTOCK can convert those files to the SYNSTOCK format. SYNSTOCK can also convert stock-data files to DIF files for use with SYNCALC and SYNGRAPH.

GETTING STARTED: A blank data disk is required to start out. Data disks must be initialized before they can be used. A blank formatted disk that has not been initialized will not work. If you have two disk drives, the data disk is used in drive 2. Using the different functions in SYNSTOCK is very easy because SYNSTOCK is menu driven. After selecting a function the specific program loads and then provides additional prompts for the next required action. To create your initial stock quote file you would select the UPDATE QUOTES function and then the KEY ENTRY function.

Creating the file is easy. Just type the name of the stock when you see the appropriate prompt. You'll then have to input five additional pieces of information to complete a stock quote for one day. (See illustration.)

The maximum dollar value for high, low, and closing statements is $999,999. The minimum value is $0. If you're tracking penny stocks, you can't use prices less than $.001 (any value with more than three places right of the decimal point) because stock quote information will appear in scientific notation. Each individual stock is limited to a maximum of 300 daily quotes (the equivalent of an entire trading year). Note, however, that the program will not chart more than 99 entries. Depending on the number of daily quotes you input for a stock, you can store as many as 50 different stocks on each data disk.

```
DATE (DDMMYY)     _____________
TRADING VOLUME    _____________ (max = 9,999,999)
HIGH (price)      _____________
LOW  (price)      _____________
CLOSE(price)      _____________
```

Entering daily stock quotes can be a bit tricky. SYNSTOCK does not allow you to make mistakes. If your closing price is higher than the "high for the day" entry, SYNSTOCK will tell you there is a mistake and make you start the daily quote over again. You can use the delete-backspace key to delete an erroneous entry, but if you don't catch the mistake before hitting RETURN you have to start that entry again. SYNSTOCK allows you to update a previous entry by simply filling in a new daily quote. SYNSTOCK checks the date line of the new information and then writes over the old information with the new information. This feature, as convenient as it may seem, can wreck havoc if your skill at typing numbers is as bad as mine -- enter date information very carefully! You can easily write over a previous entry by hitting the wrong number when inputting a date. SYNSTOCK does not warn you when you are about to over-write a previous entry. When you have completed entering quotes for the session SYNSTOCK will sort all entries for the stock you just worked on. It does this even if you did not enter information out of the date sequence. This process can take awhile when your file has 295 days of information.

Manually entering several day's worth of stock quotes can be a tedious process. You might want to input the past month's daily quotes to bring your records up to date. If this is the case for you, you'll either have to work with a stack of the daily newspapers next to your computer, or will first have to copy the daily information onto a note pad. If, while entering the daily quotes, you forget which day you just entered, there is no easy way to look back to the last entry. You have to exit the UPDATE/ENTRY mode, go to the main menu, and then select the LIST QUOTES option to see the last quote entered (figure 1). To begin entering daily stock quotes again you have to exit this mode, go to the main menu, and then select the UPDATE QUOTES mode again.

If you find it necessary to input many days of quotes, SYNSTOCK has an outstanding feature that lets you quickly and easily enter large volumes of stock data automatically. This feature is the built-in terminal program that allows you to connect to COMPUSERVE's MICROQUOTE, a stock information database. By using this function you can automatically enter daily, monthly, and even yearly stock quote information. To automatically load stock quotes from COMPUSERVE you'll need an ATARI 850 interface (the documentation did not specify if another

Figure 1
Listing of COMDR

DATE	VOL	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE
060184	23000	46.8	44	45.3
060284	12000	45	43.2	44.5
061084	24981	40	35	39.6
061184	12000	42	38	41
061284	7065	41	36	39
061384	1240	41	35	36
061584	3500	39	33	34
061684	3500	36	30	32
061884	4000	32	29	30
061984	2300	30	25	28
062084	3890	28	21	27
062184	1290	25	19	23
062384	1901	23	18	19
062484	2400	23	17	18
062584	3500	24	20	22
062684	2103	23	16.8	17
062884	980	20	16.7	16.8
END OF FILE				

interface would work), a 300 or 1200 baud Modem, and of course a COMPUSERVE user-id password. SYNSTOCK walks you through this function by providing numerous prompts.

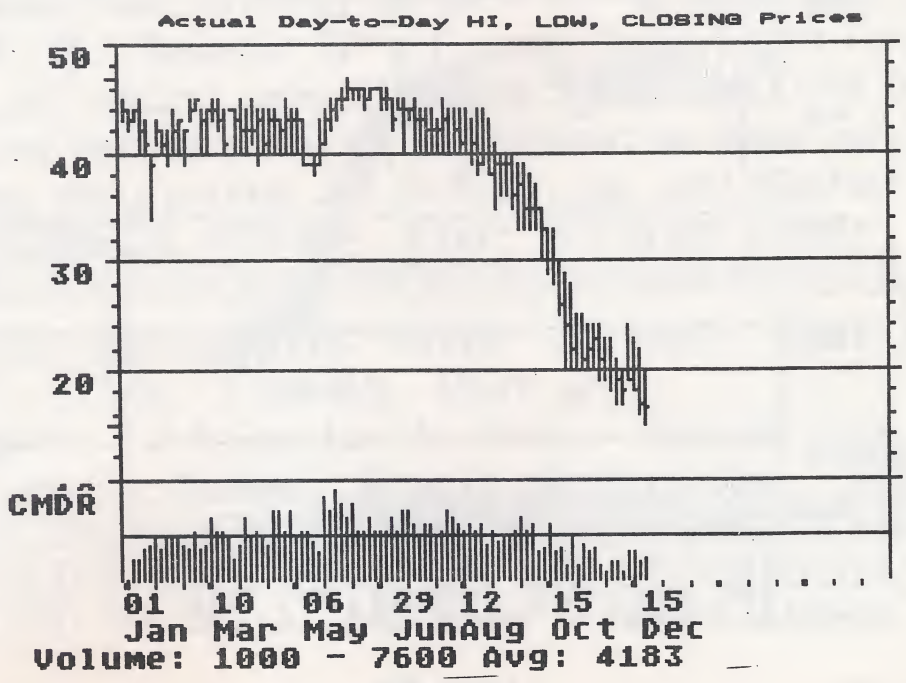
To download quotes from MICROQUOTE, your 850 interface must be turned on before loading SYNSTOCK. After selecting the DOWNLOAD QUOTES function from the main menu the screen displays the amount of memory available for information storage. With SYNSTOCK loaded and an ATARI 850 interface on-line you'll have 27,350 bytes available. Pressing START enters the terminal mode. The next step is to dial COMPUSERVE. The computer asks you to enter your id number and password. When the CIS-1 screen or the OK prompt appears you must type in "GO FIN-14". This takes you directly to MICROQUOTE. At this point all you have to do is to follow additional prompts, specifying the stock issue of interest, the information needed (price, high, low, closing, etc) and the start and stop dates of the information. MICROQUOTE tells you how much it will cost to get your information. At this point you have the option of cancelling the request or continuing.

When the information has been downloaded into memory, you must write the data to disk. You can either sign off from COMPUSERVE or stay connected before writing the information to disk. If you stay connected you can reenter MICROQUOTE easily: computer memory will be erased and another 27,350 bytes of memory will be available for storage. After signing off from COMPUSERVE, you can merge the downloaded files with an existing file of the same stock. SYNSTOCK will automatically resort the data in date order.

CHARTS and ANALYSIS: Charts and analysis cannot be done until you have a stock data-file to work from. To create a stock chart you select the CHART STOCKS option on the menu. Additional prompts will get you to the charting program. Select the stock you want to chart and the starting and stopping dates you want included in the chart. SYNSTOCK will automatically size the graph to match the high-low prices and start-stop dates of the selected stock. You cannot change the size or parameters of the chart. The chart that appears on the monitor screen is high resolution and is easy to read. It takes about eight seconds to draw. Printing the chart, using an Epson FX-80, takes about three minutes and uses an entire letter size sheet of paper. The paper version is not as pretty as the screen version (figure 2).

The chart shows the the low, high, and average volume for the period. It also plots the spread of high and low prices for each day. Daily volumes are graphically represented on the bottom of the chart. After charting the stock you can use the SYNSTOCK technical analysis func-

Figure 2



tions. Two types of analysis can be performed -- moving averages and oscillators. The moving average feature smoothes the curve of the closing price points on the chart of the period you specify (figure 3). I selected an eight-day average over the entire portfolio for this example. The new chart shows the original closing prices and the new closing prices based on an average of all closing prices. The new curve represents the stock's price movement trend as it would look if all the daily prices were condensed into an eight-day period. You can select a cycle average between two and 51 days.

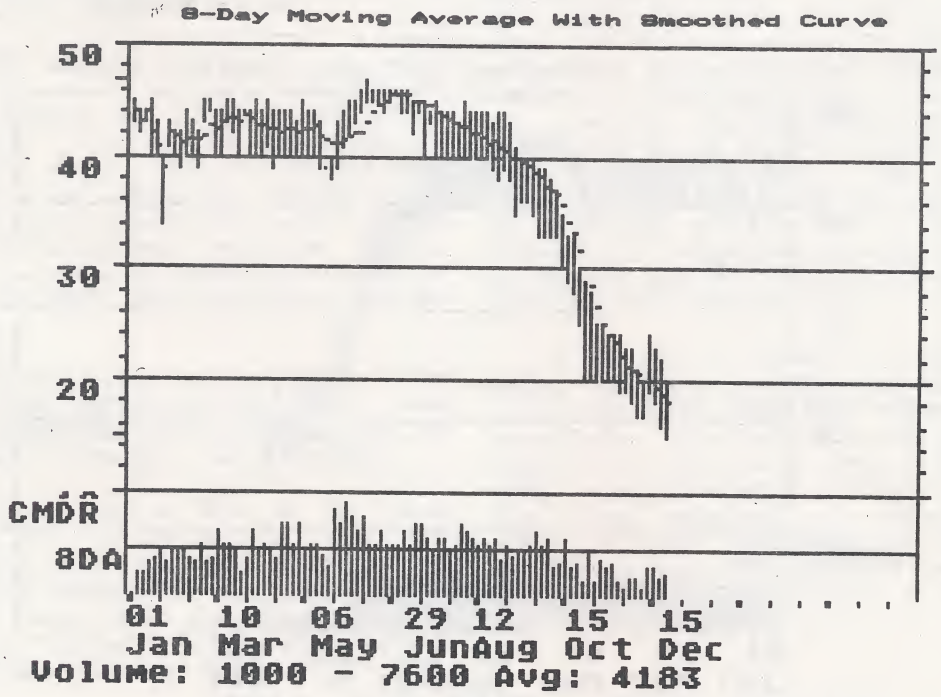
To include an oscillator in the analysis you have to complete at least one moving average analysis. The oscillator will show you the difference between two points in time. For this example it shows the difference between the actual closing price and the moving average price. The difference is displayed as a bar chart on the bottom of the screen, replacing the daily volume bar charts. When including the oscillator analysis you have a variety of choices for comparison; moving average minus a second moving average, price minus a moving average, and price or moving average minus price or volume. WARNING, SYNSTOCK's analysis functions are not sophisticated enough to tell you when to buy or sell stock. They serve only to give you a "rough" idea of how prices are moving. At best, it may may point out sudden changes that require further investigation by you.

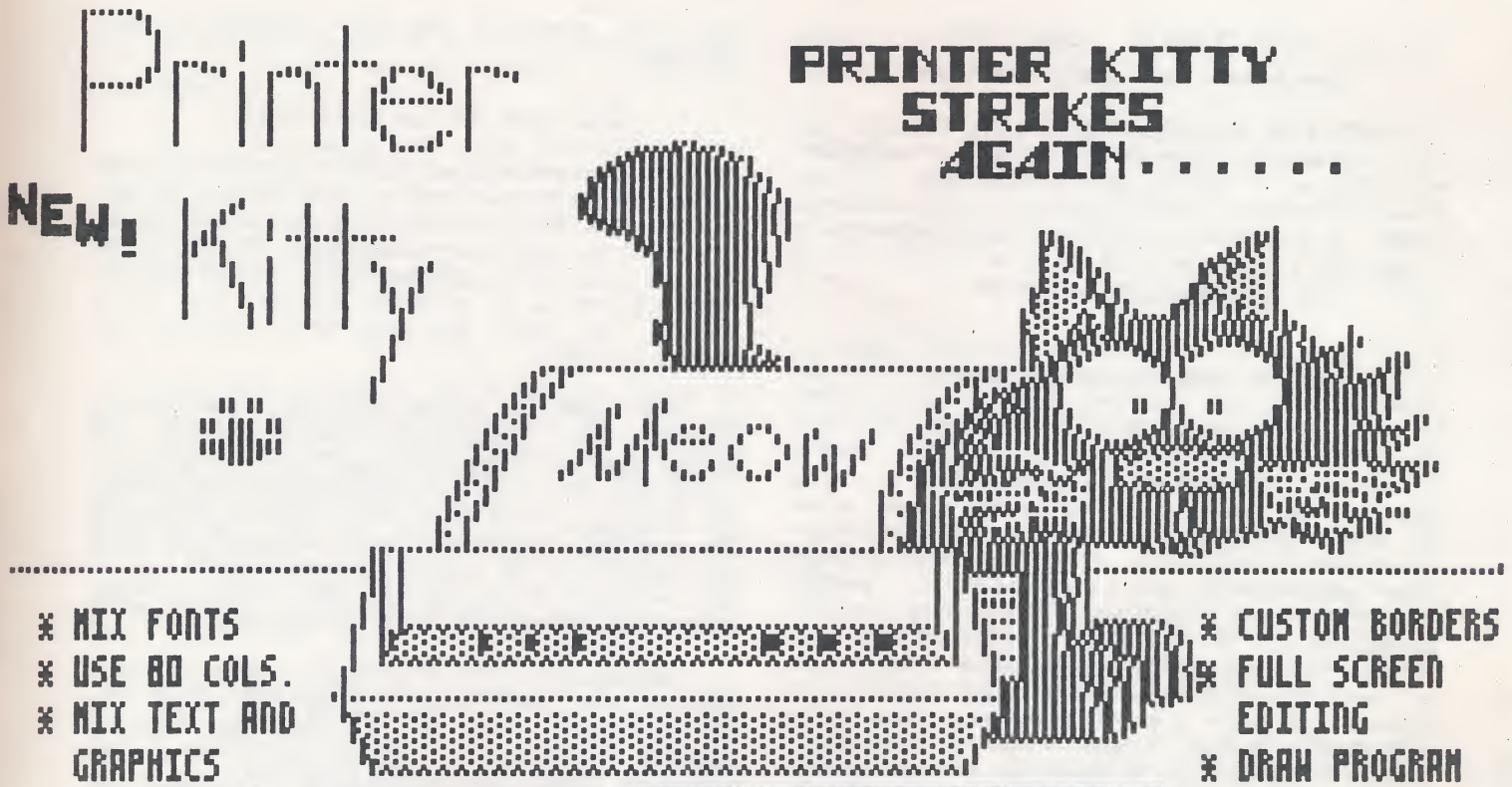
OTHER FUNCTIONS: SYNSTOCK includes several utility functions. One function allows you to change the name of stock dat-file. This can be handy if a company you have been tracking is sold or bought out. If you've suddenly learned that a particular stock split three months ago, you can adjust earlier stock quotes by using the SPLIT ADJUSTMENT feature. This feature factors in the new prices and volumes based on a percentage or ratio split that you provide the computer. Other utility features provide for disk initialization, creating DIF files, converting ATARI Stock Charting files, and deleting files.

BOTTOM LINE: So, who needs this program? Well, if you are squeamish about buying stocks and would rather track your "hunches" for a while before plunking money down, then SYNSTOCK is an excellent program for that purpose. If you want to keep accurate day-to-day records of stocks you already own, then SYNSTOCK will do that very well also, especially if you are a COMPUSERVE subscriber. The capability to tie into COMPUSERVE is SYNSTOCK's strongest and best feature. It's a time saver and gives you access to a massive database of current and historical stock data. SYNSTOCK's analytical functions are nice, but they don't provide you with much more than you would already know if you were closely following the market. The charting capability is useful in graphically showing price trends. The chart package would have more utility if it could present more than one stock on the chart at a time. A work-around for this deficiency would be to create DIF files and transfer the stock information to SYNGRAPH or even possibly to B/GRAPH from Irata Press Ltd. If used for the right application SYNSTOCK can be a good program -- it's easy to use, and it's priced right. It provides the means to easily record some of the information that can help YOU make decisions on stock transactions. All you need now is a subscription to the Wall Street Journal, which incidentally, costs more than SYNSTOCK.

POST SCRIPT: Actual stock information was used for the charts and quote list in this review. The information represents six months of stock quotes (January 1984 -- December 1984). The company's stock, as depicted in the charts, dropped from a high of 46.6 in June 1984 to a low of 16.7 in December 1984. The president of that company left in 1984 for new challenges. That man now runs our favorite computer company.

Figure 3





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PRINT SHOP

Reviewed by John Barnes

PRINT SHOP, copyrighted by Pixellite Computer Products and marketed by Broderbund Software, is a fun program that can be used in many practical ways. The user creates combinations of lettering and graphics that are dumped out on a dot matrix printer. Think of each item as a page that a print shop would set up on a single sheet of paper. Even non-artists can create some very attractive effects.

What the Program Does

PRINT SHOP produces five types of output. The variety of uses that can be made of the output is a function of the user's imagination. A "greeting card" is a setup page with two image areas, each area has a border around it, with a graphic pattern overlaid by text in the interior. The two image areas are arranged so that the page, after proper folding, yields what looks like a greeting card. On a "sign", one panel of the greeting card fills an entire page. A "letterhead" provides one setup panel of mixed text and graphics at the top and a diffrent one at the bottom of the page. The "banner" form of output displays text and/or a graphic design as a single line as tall as a printer page is wide. A separate "screen magic" function allows the user to superimpose text on a kaleidoscopic pattern. Results can be printed or saved on disk.

There are 10 choices (including the null choice) of border (for greeting cards and signs). There is, unfortunately, no way to design additional borders. The aspect ratio and size of the area enclosed by the border are also fixed. The border selection menu provides a preview of the actual design of the border that the user selects.

Text may be set up in one of eight type fonts (sorry, no mixing of fonts). The attributes of the font are selectable, depending somewhat on the type font and the application. Possible attributes include solid lettering, outline lettering, or "3-D" lettering. There is some control over text positioning and lettering size. Attributes, positioning and size may be selected for each line on a page. The number of lines on a page is controlled by the font and the lettering size.

There are 60 different canned graphic designs built into PRINT SHOP. The graphic editor utility allows the user to build his own graphic designs from scratch or to modify existing ones. The image is built dot by dot on a grid 87 x 51 pixels. The graphic editor can be driven from the keyboard (which, in some cases, is the best way), a Koala Pad, a joystick, or an Atari Touch Tablet. The advantage of graphics tablet input is largely lost because the grid is so small and there are no primitives for lines, shapes, or fill. Graphics constructed in this way can be saved to disk and recalled for subsequent use.

Graphic patterns can be replicated on the setup page in various ways (one graphic per setup, please). The range of choices for text and graphics is large enough so that no one should feel that their creativity is being suppressed.

How the Program Works

The menus that drive PRINT SHOP are excellent. User feedback is quick and informative. For instance, the border selection, the type font, the graphic images, and the text input are all displayed immediately. Menu selections are made using the up and down arrows followed by a [RETURN]. Extraneous or erroneous keystrokes are nicely trapped. The program does not, however, work with old Revision A OS ROMs.

PRINT SHOP is on two sides of a self-booting, protected disk. Operations are totally menu-driven. The program does not recognize the existence of a Ramdisk or a second disc drive, so there is considerable disk swapping and flipping. The creative process is slow, because you can view your creation only on the printer and all output is in the form of dot graphics. I have not found a way to save an entire set up page for later rework, although certain important portions of your design can be saved.

Although the layout process is a tree structure, there is some freedom to move up and down in the tree. This allows you to back up to change type styles or graphics. The familiar screen editing functions for text lines have, however, been largely eliminated.

Printer Support

Check the outside of the box before you buy the program to make sure that your printer-interface combination is one of the many that are supported. Some printers are only partially supported. The vendor does, at least, provide fair warning. I was delighted to see that Graftrax-80 was still being supported here. The first time the disk is used you will be taken to the printer setup function, which builds an appropriate printer driver, tests it, and installs it on your system disc. The disc has to be write-enabled for this function, but it is smart to write-protect it as soon as possible thereafter. The range of printers supported seems very comprehensive. If, for some reason, you change printers you can reconfigure your printer support at the beginning of a session.

Documentation

The reference manual is a 26 page document that expands on the menu selections and provides examples of the different types of output. The authors' claim that you do not need to read the manual is misleading, because you will have a much better idea of what is happening after reading it. The program is simple to use largely because it doesn't try to do anything complicated. A reference card is also supplied, and this card is important because it provides the only look at the complete type fonts and graphic menus. The reference card and the manual need to be used together.

The reference manual does not flag some of the quirks. Reconfiguring the printer support after install-

ing the Graftrax+ upgrade in my printer required a couple of tries. I finally succeeded by doing the reconfiguration immediately after a reboot.

All of the material that is on the reference card should be reprinted in the manual because the reference card is too easily lost. Additional explanations regarding limitations on the characters in the fonts and some simple tables listing the effect of font and letter size selection would be highly desirable.

Quirks

The designers obviously had to make compromises in order to live within certain limitations, but I find some of their choices to be a little quirky. The first quirk has to do with the designers' choice of a non-standard DOS. Edited graphics and screen magic images can only be saved to disks that must be specially formatted by the PRINT SHOP program itself. I am always annoyed by this because I like to catalog my work, and I have a hard time doing this if I cannot read the disk directories. I wish that software vendors would stop playing this game.

The finished output can only be viewed on the printer page and printing out a design is a fairly protracted process. Some people may find this creative process too slow to justify the results. This quirk could easily have been remedied by supplying a utility program that could bit map the layout to the computer screen.

The printing utility is obviously using some kind of a database to drive the output. It seems to me that this database could easily be made saveable to disk. The absence of a save feature also implies that the whole project has to be done in one sitting. Most of us do not like to risk losing work that takes some time to generate. However, a PRINT SHOP design can be reconstructed reasonably quickly because there are not too many choices and the designs do not hold much lettering.

I guess there are simply not enough bytes on the disks to allow the fonts to include lower case letters and a more complete selection of special characters.

Hints and Kinks

The appearance of the design can often be improved with ink retouching. Additional flexibility can be obtained with the help of scissors, paste, and a copying machine. Since there is no way to save a completed layout to disk, the user would do well to keep an annotated copy of the final product.

Some Things I Would Like to See

There are several additional features that I would like to see in addition to the save function and the screen preview mentioned above. The first of these is an interface that would allow graphic images from other sources, such as the Koala Pad or the Atari Touch Tablet to be uploaded and dressed up with text. I think it would be nice to have customizable font menus and directions for building one's own fonts. An editor for the border designs would also be nice.

Compatability with Atari DOS would be a boon, as it would open up the system to people who could create expansion utilities. I think the designers will shoot themselves in the foot if they try to maintain an environment that is too tightly closed.

Conclusion

PRINT SHOP is an economical alternative to McPaint on the McIntosh. However, given the Atari's limitations on memory, processor power, and disk space, the user should not expect too much. Pricing (I paid $39.95 at Applied Computer Associates) is a little steep given the rough output and limited flexibility of the package.

There is lots of room for further development, and Pixellite plans to publish a newsletter (1 free year is included with the warranty registration). Pixellite also peddles supplies such as colored paper, colored envelopes, and colored printer ribbons so that the user can dress up his output. David Balsam and Martin Kahn, the authors of PRINT SHOP, are apparently asociated with Pixellite.

I hope that we can publish some PRINT SHOP output in future issues of CURRENT NOTES and I look forward to some enjoyable, useful, and creative work.

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THE TAX ADVANTAGE

by Harry Koons & Henry Hilton

Arrays, Inc./Continental Software, $69.95

Reviewed by Allen H. Lerman

Summary. The Tax Advantage is a program to complete your 1984 federal income tax return. Using The Tax Advantage (TA), you enter your tax return data line-by-line just as you would on the paper forms provided by the Internal Revenue Service. As you enter information, TA does the arithmetic and the actual tax calculation. At any point, you can see your tax liability and balance due based on the information you have entered. You can move around your tax return and its various attachments entering information and making corrections and modifications to previous entries. When you are finished, TA can be used to print your tax returns, either in draft or in a form suitable for submission to IRS. TA will also transfer relevant tax data from Continental Software's Home Accountant for those who have used that program during the year to maintain their financial records.

In addition to Form 1040, TA covers the following tax forms: Schedule A (Itemized Deductions); Schedule B (Interest and Dividend Income); Schedule C (Profit or Loss from Business or Profession); Schedule D (Capital Gains and Losses); Schedule E (rental, royalty, partnership, estate, and trust income); Schedule G (Income Averaging); Schedule SE (Social Security Self-Employment Tax); Schedule W (Deduction for a Married Couple When Both Work); Form 2106 (Employee Business Expenses); Form 2441 (Credit for Child Care Expenses); Form 4562 (Depreciation); and Form 6251 (Alternative Minimum Tax).

The Tax Advantage is a polished, well-written, well-documented program which should be considered by any Atari owner who plans to use his computer to help with with his or her income tax return.

Using The Tax Advantage. TA is used like a paper tax form except that TA takes care of the arithmetic and the tax calculation. The TA program disk contains the programs, tax rates, and text for the various tax forms. The information for each person's tax return is stored on a data disk for reuse as needed.

You begin by entering a title (so that TA can distinguish between data disks for various returns) followed by the taxpayer's name, social security number (for use in printing each tax form), his or her filing status (single, married, etc.), and number of exemptions.

TA's main screen format for entering tax data reproduces portions of tax forms several lines at a time. Initially, the screen displays the first lines of the Form 1040. For each line, the screen shows the line number from the tax form, a very brief title for the line, and a place for a numerical entry. Lines on which an entry can be made are in capitals; lines calculated by TA are in lower-case letters. The title of the tax form in use is shown at the top of the screen. A menu of options is displayed at the bottom of the screen. As options are used, the menu area may change to display further instructions, such as the format for the entry, or your tax liability, marginal tax rate, and refund orbalance due. All entries must be made by selecting options from currently displayed menu; the program ignores all other key strokes.

The menu items for the Form 1040 (and most other forms) are:

U/D Move cursor Up or Down one line (Control-arrows also work).

F/R Move Forward or Backward (reverse) one screen of lines.

L Go directly to a Line. Line number is then entered.

H Help. Display a explanation of the tax form line.

E Edit. Used to enter an on a line.

+/- Add or Subtract to amount on line.

I Itemize a line. This is the most powerful command in TA. If a form line summarizes information from another form, Itemize switches you to the other form. Otherwise, Itemize enables you to make a list of the various items, such as income from different jobs, adds up the items, and places the sum onto the tax form line being itemized.

T Displays tax liability, tax rate on last dollar of income, and the refund or balance due (that is, tax liability less amount withheld).

O Temporarily Overrides the entry on a line, and displays tax liability based on temporary entry.

Q Quit the particular form and return to the 1040. If on 1040, quit and save tax return.

Ctrl-X Overrides the entry on a line until that line is itemized again.

In certain situations, such as while working on an itemized list, other commands are available. Their use is similar to the commands outlined above.

Each time you move between forms using the "Itemize" and "Quit" commands, TA uses the disk drive to save information from one form, to load in a program to process the next form, and to load in any previously entered data for the next form. Thus, if a system failure were to occur, TA effectively protects against data losses for all forms except for the particular one in use. (Data for only one tax return can be placed on a single disk, and the amount of data which can be stored for any tax return is limited to what will fit on one disk.)

After you have completed entering your tax data into TA, you can use TA to print out your tax forms and itemizations in either of two formats. Draft format reproduces the entries in an easy to read, easy to check format very similar to TA's screen entry format. However, this format is not compatible with IRS data processing operations, and draft format printouts of tax forms may NOT be submitted as tax returns. The second printing option prints forms except for the Form 1040 itself in a format acceptable for submission to IRS. IRS will not accept computer prepared substitutes for the Form 1040 itself. Hence, data from the TA must be copied onto a paper 1040.

Presentation and Documentation. TA is supplied in a cardboard slip case containing a loose-leaf manual. The program disk, which slips inside the manual binder, entirely fills both sides of the disk. During use, the program directs flipping of the disk, as necessary. In addition to the TA program and files for tax forms, it includes an excellent demonstration program, a runtime module for BASIC/XL, and the DOS/XL disk operating system.

TA can be configured for use with one or two disk drives. Use with one disk drive requires the user to make two disk swaps each time TA switches from one form, schedule, or itemization to another. With a two-drive system, disk drives only need attention when the TA disk needs to be flipped from one side to the other. TA can be used with most 80-column printers and, if your printer supports underling, can produce output suitable for submission to IRS.

A free backup disk of the copy-protected disk is sent when the warranty card is returned. Unfortunately, on a time-sensitive program like TA, a wait of three or more weeks for the backup disk may render the program useless. The backup should in in the original package.

TA includes free disk replacement for three months and user support by mail for one year. After three months, replacement disks cost $19.50. However, for a $10 fee, Continental Software will provide free disk replacements and telephone user support for one year and the right to purchase the next year's TA for half price. The main benefit of the extended warranty is the ability to get the 1985 TA as soon as it becomes available. Otherwise, there is little point in extending the warranty on a product that becomes outdated in a few weeks.

The documentation is divided into two parts: one common to all versions of the program; the other specifically for the Atari. For the new user, the most important part of the manual is a tutorial including pictures of the various screens used by TA. In most cases, the tutorial and/or the six-minute demonstration program is all a new user needs to get started. Reference material includes: special information or cautions for particular tax forms; a detailed listing of various menu options and indicator flags; instructions on how to transfer data from the Home Accountant program to TA; and the requirements for submitting printed output from TA as part of your tax return.

Changes for 1984. Those who used TA for their 1983 returns will see several additions and one deletion. The 1984 version handles three additional tax forms: employee business expenses (Form 2106); the credit for child care expenses (Form 2441); and the alternative minimum tax (Form 6251). In addition to printing drafts of tax forms, TA for 1984 will print acceptable substitutes which can be submitted to IRS for all forms and schedules other than the Form 1040 itself. TA provides a line to insert the results of the special computation for dependent minors who have more than $1,000 of non-wage income. Previously, it was not possible to use TA to complete returns for such minors. Missing from the 1984 version is the program module to transfer data from the prior year's TA. Thus, lists of payors of interest or dividends cannot be captured from last year's TA; the names will have to be entered from scratch this year. Similarly, if you used the 1983 version of TA to prepare a draft of your 1984 tax return, you will have to re-enter everything.

Who should use the Tax Advantage? TA provides four important benefits. (1) TA enables you to check various alternatives quickly. Should you use the income averaging tax calculation? How much will expensing an investment or taking accelerated depreciation reduce your taxes this year? Should a husband and wife file separate tax returns? (2) If you know where everything is to be placed on your tax forms, TA may save time in filling-in the actual returns. (3) TA will save time and minimize copying and arithmetic errors and errors in computing or looking up the actual income tax amount. Also, if errors are made, TA allows you to correct only the incorrect entry; TA will automatically correct all associated arithmetic and will recalculate the tax. (4) TA will save time by printing substitute tax returns which can be submitted to IRS.

In spite of these benenfits, however, I do not believe that tax programs significantly ease the burden of tax prearation for most people who prepare only one or two tax returns each year. I question whether the benefits of TA in reducing the anxiety associated with income tax, reducing the amount of time spent on tax preparation, and the slight possibility of reducing your income tax liability exceed the costs of purchasing the TA program and the extra time spent in learning to use TA and in entering tax data in a very specific and inflexible manner.

The most difficult portions of the tax preparation process involve determining what parts of tax law and tax forms are applicable, the collection of the relevant data, and determining where to place the data on various tax forms. Unfortunately, tax preparation programs do not help you understand the tax system or decide which parts of the law are applicable to you. They are of little help in data collection unless they are used together with a computerized accounting system. Thus, TA could be of benefit to those who keep their financial records on the Home Accountant. For others, however, TA and other tax programs do little more than check arithmetic, perform a few simple tax calculations, and eliminate the need to copy a few tax forms. For those with relatively simple financial situations, I doubt that TA will provide a net saving of time when the time to acquire and learn to use TA are factored in. For people with complex financial situations, already employing professional advice to know what to include and where to include it, TA is an unnecessary expense. Finally, people who fall somewhere in between must weigh the $50 to $70 outlay for a tax program against the benefits of using a similar amount for professional tax preparation.

Conclusion. The Tax Advantage is an excellent program with excellent documentation. Although I have reservations about the usefulness of any tax preparation program for people who complete only one tax return a year, if you decide that you need a tax program, the Tax Advantage should definitely be among the programs considered.

HOMETEXT

Batteries Included, $49.95 list

Reviewed by Art Corte

Hometext is the word processing program included in **HomePack**, a package that also contains a data base manager **HomeFind** and a terminal program **HomeTerm** (being reviewed seperately). It was written by Russ Wettmore, author of **Preppie** and other programs and one of the Sysops of the Atari SIG on CompuServe. **HomePack** comes on a single non-copy protected disk, with the author's plea that you be honest and not pass copies on to others. At the modest price he is asking for the three programs that is only fair.

The package **HomePack** comes in is most ingenious -- it folds to form a stand to hold the instruction manual at an appropriate angle so that it is easy to refer to while typing.

The disk boots to a screen presenting the three programs. The desired one is chosen with the SELECT key and then loaded with the START key. **Hometext** comes on with a copyright screen, pressing any key brings forth a blank screen upon which one can begin keying in text.

At the bottom of the screen are two status lines giving the name of the file being worked on, if the key click is on or off, the number of bytes left in the buffer, whether one is in insert or replace mode, the current output device, and the name of any file being merged. Another line gives instructions on how to move from text to command screens and vice versa.

A major advantage of **HomeText** over **Atariwriter** is that its has both insert and replace modes, toggled back and forth by the Atari logo key, which permits one to type over errors, rather than having to delete the error first and then type in the correct text. This reviewer, accustomed to working in replace mode on his office's Wang, has found **Atariwriter's** insert only mode infuriating and **Hometext** an answer to a prayer.

All processing takes place in a memory buffer of 8350 bytes, enough to hold about two pages of single spaced text. When the buffer is full, it must be saved to a file. Long documents are handled by stringing together a series of such files by means of a format file containing only format instructions and a list of the files making up the document.

Cursor movement is via the control and cursor keys, With the appropriate combination of keys, one can move to the top or bottom of the text, back and forth through the text by screens, to the top, middle or bottom of a screen, to the beginning or end of a line, erase characters, entire lines and insert spaces. The manual provides a handy reference guide to the key combinations.

Block manipulation is called up by the start key -- which brings up a menu window in the center of the screen overwriting the text -- offering Move, Copy and Delete options. On chosing an option, a smaller window asks you to place the cursor at the beginning of the block. Ater doing so and hitting return, a prompt asks you to place it at the end of the block. The final prompt asks that the cursor be put where the block is to go, (or in the delete option, for a verification of the command). The block menu also has a Search and replace option. After one has learned the commands, the menu can be bypassed by holding down the START key and pressing the M, C, D, or S keys as appropriate.

Pressing SELECT at any point calls forth the functions menu with commands for loading, saving and appending files, previewing the printout, configuring the printer, displaying disk directories, choosing the output device, clearing the buffer, deleting files, printing, and merging text with a **HomeFind** file.

In lieu of a printer driver for this program, there is a configure printer function which allows you to enter the appropriate codes for turning on and off boldface, extended print and underlining. These are saved on the program disk with a CTRL-W and become the subsequent default settings. Similarly the default settings for all margins, line and page length, screen color and brightness, and text brightness can be changed and stored.

The print preview program draws a picture of what the printed output will look like on the screen, using dotted lines to show text and and indicating special typefaces or underlining with color. Unfortunately, this option uses up 5400 bytes of the buffer so that only short documents can be previewed directly from the buffer, longer documents require that you save the buffer to disk, and call the file up using the include option. It works and will allow you to preview long files but it is something of a nuisance. For some purposes I found this more convenient that the preview system of Atariwriter, for others not. As long as one tries to write 80 column documents on a 40 column screen, there will be no perfect answers.

The "choose output device" option allows you to send a print file to disk or printer. When sent to a disk, your file can be transferred to **Atariwriter** for further manipulation.

Pressing and releasing the option key in text screen mode brings on a window of formatting and print options including margins, indents, page size, line length and spacing, center or block right placement, bold, extended or underlined type, justify, headers and footers, page end and page wait, merge (with the companion **HomeFile** system) and printer control codes. Hitting the appropriate key as shown in the menu inserts the appropriate codes at the cursor location. When you have learned the codes, the menu can be bypassed by typing the appropriate key while holding down the option key.

HomeText has some failings; it does not handle double column printing nor provide for subscripts or superscripts. The merge capability with its companion program **HomeFile** is poorly documented, a concrete example of how to set up an address file using **HomeFile** and merge it with **HomeText** would be useful.

Nonetheless, I have no qualms about recommending **HomeText**. The ability to toggle between replace and insert modes was such an advance over **Atariwriter** that I switched over to **Hometext** immediately. It was very easy to learn to use and the window prompts diminish the need to refer to the instruction manual. The number of keystrokes for various functions may be a bit higher but the ability to use replace mode more than compensates. For the short letters and notes that make up most of my word processing tasks, I have found **HomeText's** print preview system handier than **Atariwriter's**, as I only want to make sure that the overall appearance of the document looks right. In all its an excellent program and given the low price for it and the other two programs that make up **HomePack** an outstanding buy.

==========

INPUT FREEDOM IN ATARI BASIC

by Alice Barney

Many ATARI BASIC users have had trouble with the INPUT string statement. They often input an extra question mark. Normally, it is not safe to use insert, delete and arrow keys with the INPUT statement.

However, you can use INPUT to fix a string value. Print out the string first, on a new line. Then INPUT the same string variable name. Use the UP ARROW key to reach the "line" you just printed. Edit the string as needed, then press the RETURN key.

The following short program demonstrates this:

```
 5 REM A. BARNEY, (703) 978-9376
10 REM DEMO OF INPUT STATEMENT USE TO
      CHANGE A STRING
20 DIM A$(80)
40 A$="JUNK"
50 ? "ARROW UP, FIX STRING, AND USE RETURN KEY--QUIT=END"
60 ? "STRING LENGTH IS ";LEN(A$)
70 ? A$
80 INPUT A$
85 IF LEN(A$)<4 THEN 50
90 IF A$(1,4)<>"QUIT" THEN 50
100 ? "THE END":END
```

I have used this technique in a BASIC text edit program. More than 1000 names are maintained for a Community Directory. Each year, there are names to add, delete and change. Some name changes involve only a few characters. But since every line is the same 63-character size, most changes require at least two fixes to the same line. In the past, the entire line had to be rekeyed. With the INPUT statement used for line replacement, only a few characters had to be changed in most lines. Corrections were made more rapidly and with fewer errors.

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New Members: Dues are $15/year (includes subscription to Current Notes). Mail check, payable to AURA, to Treasurer, AURA, P.O. Box 7761, Silver Spring, MD 20907.

A.U.R.A. Minutes: March 6, 1985
by Eric Stone

Business: New president, Marshall Abrams, reported his program ideas for future meetings. On tap in April -- a presentation on word-processing; tentatively set for May -- communications.

Reports from other officers followed. The treasury looks healthy and AURA has welcomed many new members.

Libarian's Report: Bill Schadt described the contents of disk #39. Disk includes LEARNIT.BAS, a text memorization aid, FINDIT, a string search program utility, MATHMIS.BAS, a math game/tutorial for grade school children, mortgage and IRA planning aids and several other interesting programs. Bill is in the process of completing a detailed, cross-referenced index of all AURAs disks. These will be available at approximately $10 ($15 for bound editions) and include reviews of the programs.

Demonstration: Marshall Abrams demonstrated a VISICALC tax template. Moe Sherman followed wth an explanation of Continental's "Tax Advantage" software. SynCalc owners were informed of the tax templates in the February and April 1985 issues of "Antic."

John Barnes demonstrated the new "Print Shop" program which can be used to easily create cards, banners and posters with a wide range of printers. The program is available at ACA in Gaithersburg.

Discussion: A general Q & A session followed on a wide range of subjects allowing users to help each other resolve problems.

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VP-Finances.	Reg Brown.....	301/340-7943
VP-Library..	Mike Abramowitz	301/983-2363

Meetings: Capital Pro Micro-Users meetings are held on **the fourth Tuesday of every month** at the Public Library in Oxon Hill, Maryland. The Library is located near the Woodrow Wilson Bridge just off the Washington beltway. Take the beltway to Maryland exit #4 East (St. Barnabas Road). St. Barnabas Road merges with Oxon Hill Rd.; proceed 1/4 mile and Library will be on your left. The meetings are held each month in the Author Room. The Library telephone number is 301-839-2400.

New Members: Dues are $15/year (includes a subscription to Current Notes) or $3/year (no subscription). Send check, payable to Reg Brown, to Reg Brown, 9325 Bent Ridge, Potomac, Maryland 20854.

President's Report
by Bob Kelly

March Meeting. The next meeting is scheduled for April 23, 1985, at 6:30 p.m. At the March meeting, Reg Brown gave a tutorial on the Tax Advantage by Continental Software covering many of the more sophisticated and/or difficult tax schedules. Craig Smith also answered questions on some of the advanced applications of dBASE II.

Incidentally, Tax Advantage users should be aware that in the use of Schedule D a problem may arise. Continental Software has advised if you show a capital loss on line 24 of Schedule D, then line 25 of Schedule D and line 13 of Form 1040 may be incorrect unless you perform the Final Calculation (as described in the manual). An "X" in the status column for a particular line indicates that you must still perform the Final Calculation. Continental Software has suggested that you can assure yourself of the correct value by following 2 steps:

- With the pointer on line 13 of Form 1040, press I
- When Schedule D appears, press Q

At the March meeting it was also decided to change the club name slightly. This change is designed to both recognize the diversity of interest in the group and to simplify the name. The new name is CAPITAL PRO MICRO-USERS (CPM).

Library Disks. Two new CPM disk volumes have been added. They are Utility Disk #3 and Telecommunications Disk #2. Utility disk #3 includes: Nulu 10 - a replacement for Lu and Lsweep13; Nsweep27 - the latest version (7/84); Diskdef2 - ATR enhanced read and write utility (modified to work correctly on Kaypro) plus four

other utility programs. This is a DS/DD disk. Telecom #2 is the complete MEX terminal program and documentation for operation on the ATR-8000. This is a SS/DD disk.

SWP News. SWP has advised that there is a bug in the MS-DOS 2.1 system disk which creates problems when formatting an 8-inch disk. Call SWP and give them your serial number in order to obtain free replacement disk. Also SWP is working on a terminal program for use with the copover option. It is hoped that by the end of April an MS-DOS telecommunications capability will be available. SWP's new telephone number is (817)-924-7759.

NCAUG
National Capital Atari Users' Group

President...	Frank Huband...	703/527-4770
Treasurer...	Allen H. Lerman	301/460-0289
Membership..	Gerald Whitmore	301/459-6164
Programs....	Art Corte.....	703/437-7860
V-Programs..	Jim Campbell...	703/425-1440
Disk Lib....	Abe Friedman...	703/920-4788
Tape Lib....	Bruce Ingalls..	703/430-3287

Meetings. 3rd Tuesday of every month, 5:30-8:30, Room 543, National Science Foundation offices, 1800 G. Street NW, Washington, DC. The closest subway stop is Farragut West, on the Blue and Orange lines. Take the 18th Street exit, and walk south (against the flow of traffic) down 18th Street for three blocks to G street. The building, on the corner of 18th and G, can be identified by a sign for the Madison National Bank on the corner. Parking is available in the building for a fee. The front entrance is on the west side of 18th street, between F and G.

New Members: Dues are $15 (includes subscription to Current Notes). Send checks, payable to National Capital Atari Users Group, to Allen Lerman, 14905 Waterway Drive, Rockville, MD 20853.

NCAUG News
by Peter Kilcullen

HARDWARE/SOFTWARE SWAP: NCAUG sponsered a hardware/software swap at its March 19 meeting. The event was sucessful and future swaps are planned.

DISK LIBRARY: Our new disk librarian, Abe Friedman, is sorting out exactly what programs are on the disks. Currently there are 27 club disks available (5 Utilities, 4 Games, 8 Mixed utilities/games, 4 Music, 2 Graphics, and 1 each Telecom, Education, Adventure). A detailed index is available at the meetings. In addition, the library has available ANALOG magazine disks for subscribers for issues #8 through #28. With a new librarian, we look forward to many more contributions to the library.

ARMUDIC BULLETIN BOARD: Frank Huband has debugged the FOREM BBS program to work with the Armudic equipment which is sponsered by NCAUG and NOVATARI. Currently, the BBS is in Frank's home for further testing. However, it is hoped that the BBS will be up and running when you receive this issue of Current Notes. The BBS number is 425-6698.

CLUB ELECTIONS: The annual club meeting for election of officers and directors is in June of each year. The meeting this year will be June 17. We will need new officers and persons willing to voluteer their services in special interest areas such as: club programs, library, BBS and telecommunications, new member help, administration, and technical advice. This notice should give everyone plenty of time to consider how to make our club meetings more fun and educational.

NOVATARI
Northern Virginia Atari Users Group

President.....	Joe Waters.....	430-1215
Vice President.	Jim Stevenson..	378-4093
Treasurer.....	Curtis Sandler.	734-9533
Secretary.....	G. Weatherhead.	938-4829
Publicity.....	Terry White....	849-1725
Membership.....	Earl Lilley....	281-9017
Seminars.....	Marty Vallery..	425-6832
Education.....	Diana Burdt....	425-5073
Librarian.....	M. Evan Brooks.	354-4482

Meetings: 2nd Sunday of each month, 5:30-8:30, Greenbriar Community Center, 4615 Stringfellow Road, Chantilly, VA. Stringfellow Road, (Route 645), runs south from US 50 about 2 1/2 miles west of Fair Oaks Shopping Mall (I-66 and 50). The Greenbriar Community Center is 1.4 miles south of 50. Small parking lot in front, larger one just north of Center. 5:30 to 7:30: general discussion, product sales, ad hoc demos, business meeting, product demos, door prizes; 7:30-8:30 program.

New Members: Dues are $15 (includes subscription to Current Notes). Send checks, payable to Novatari, to Curtis Sandler, 7213 Idylwood Ct., Falls Church, VA 22043.

March Minutes
by Georgia Weatherhead

Joe Hertz demonstrated his program allowing two Atari computers to play a game of Tic-Tac-Toe by communicating directly through the joystick ports which won second prize in the Science Fair at South Lakes H.S. in Reston. Patti Guldis was mentioned as having done her statistics and word processing on an Atari to win first place at the Herndon H.S. Science Fair. NOVATARI wishes both good luck at the area III Science Fair March 29-30.

Also at the March meeting were demonstartions of Tim Kilby's Graphics Trilogy, the new printer utility disk and the new 1030 modem disk (see below). The scheduled program of the evening was a demonstration of SYNCALC. Joe Waters showed how easy it was to use by setting up a spreadsheet for keeping track of bowling scores. The pop-up windows as well as the great variety of functions

available demonstrated the versatility of SYNCALC compared to the older VISICALC program.

NPX RELEASES

by Jim O. Stevenson

To date, we have three programs in our catalog: (1) VIZPICS ($4.00) by Jim M. Stevenson, (2) WORD BUILDER ($8.00) by Joe Waters, and (3) UNDELETER ($4.00) by Jon Smith. Joe's spectacular program was reviewed in the February Current Notes. It has been a smashing success with over 20 programs sold so far.

Jim Stevenson's VIZPICS, is a collection of pictures generated by Tim Kilby's Visualizer program. They can be shown individually or in an automatic mode like a slide show. Side one is a synopsis of the movie Dark Crystal with captions telling the story, and side two is a potpourri of scenes and ships from the Star Trek television series.

Jon Smith's UNDELETER is a menu-driven utility that allows you to recover accidentally deleted disk files. Complete instructions are accessible on-line. At least one feature that sets this effort above a similar program given in the April Analog ($29) is the catalog it provides of the deleted as well as saved files. But its general user-friendliness is a great plus for such a seemingly technical utility.

NOVATARI QUESTION BOX

by Jim Stevenson

The following list of questions were left at the March Novatari meeting. If you have the answers, how about bringing them to the next meeting or submitting them to the newsletter so everyone would benefit from the answer?

1. Basic Rev B: A program which runs ok when LOADed and RUN will hang the CP when "RUN D1:PROG" from another program. Any ideas?
2. How do you load an object program from Basic?
3. How do you make a back-up copy of SynCalc?
4. Is a surge suppressor necessary?
5. Should I unplug my system when it is not in use?
6. Does anyone have a 1200XL? If so Roy Brooks (750-0146) would like some info.
7. Does anyone have a Mannesman-Tally printer. If so, Duke Wheeler (281-6653) would like some info.
8. Least expensive color monitor, 80 columns. What price and who makes?
9. Atari to modem interface. Recommend alternative to 850.

NOVATARI Disk Library

by M. Evan Brooks

We finally have settled on a **mail-order policy.** If you are a member of WAACE, that is, if you receive CURRENT NOTES through one of the clubs or as a direct subscriber, you may order library disks at $3.00 each plus $1.00 postage and handling for every three disks ordered (or fraction thereof). If you are not a member of WAACE, library disks can be ordered for $5.00 each. This prices includes postage and handling. Send your orders to M. Evan Brooks, 4008 Patricia Street, Annandale, Virginia, 22003. Make checks payable to NOVATARI. New for March:

Utility Disk #2: Printer Routines. BANNER -- prints a banner with 8-inch letters. CALANYYR -- prints a large, multiple-page calendar of any year. CONDPRNT -- dumps a disk's directory to your printer in condensed print format. CRAB -- generates a cross reference list of variables versus line numbers. DIRPRINT -- the disk directory is sent to the printer in a four-column format. HEXPRNT -- dumps any file's contents to your printer in both hexadecimal and ASCII. LISTER -- allows your printer to show an Atari BASIC file, with all the unique Atari characters. LISTER38 -- dumps a BASIC file in the 38-column format typical of the screen format of an Atari. LISTNEAT --the BASIC program is listed to the printer in a cleaner format, such as line-wrap on word boundaries, etc. MAILLIST -- a simple mailing list program. PICPRNT -- dumps a GR. 7.5 or GR. 8 picture file to your printer. PRINTFNT -- your special custom character set file is sent to your printer as a large format representation of that set. SUPRCOMP -- compares two LISTED BASIC files, generating a difference file, with the option of sending it to your printer.

NOVATARI Telecom Disk #2: 835/1030 Modem Programs. This disk contains all the programs and documentation you need to work with your 835 or 1030 modems. From it you can generate three (or more) separate communications disks: **AMODEM,** a popular terminal program for communications with Atari BBS which includes the XMODEM protocol; **TSCOPE,** a terminal program for communications with CompuServe which allows uploading and downloading of CompuServe programs; and **DISKLINK,** a terminal program which includes pop-up windows and allows disk-to-disk program transfers between two Atari computers. This two-sided library disk contains all the necessary RS232 handlers, programs, and documentation files. Separate documentation files for ARMUDIC and Telecom ABCs are included on the back.

GAMES DISK #6 -- Graphics. **ENGINEER:** construct a bridge across the chasm in as few days as possible. It is harder than it looks! **NIGHT FLYER:** bring your plane down for a night landing. There are enough gauges to keep you busy and it is not so easy to maintain an even heading! **OIL:** explore for oil in an economic game of drilling. **PIAZZA HOTEL:** find the bomb planted in the hotel before it's too late? **RETROFIRE:** one of the best lunar-landing type games. Can you bring your ship down in one piece, or will you go to pieces? **TITAN:** Mining in the reaches of Outer Space. You must maximize your efforts in order to win the exclusive contract. Graphics and decisions galore!

Coming Attractions

April 14 -- Disk Operating Systems
May 12 -- Telecommunications
June 9 -- the New XE/STs (How's that for optimism!)

WACUG

Woodbridge Atari Computer Users' Group

President.....	Jack Holtzhauer..	670-6475
First VP.....	Dave Marrandette.	670-7675
VP-Education..	Tim Mitchell.....	221-7722
VP-Liaison....	Cecil Alton.....	670-4842
Secretary.....	Mike Stringer....	786-8755
Treasurer.....	John Thomas.....	670-8645
Librarian.....	Arnie Turk.....	670-2547

Meetings: Monthly, 7 - 10 pm, Community Room, Potomac Branch, Prince William County Library, Optiz Blvd., Woodbridge, VA. Meeting dates: Wed, APR 24; Wed, MAY 15; and Wed, JUN 19. Entering Woodbridge from either North or South on Route #1, proceed to the intersection of Route #1 and Opitz Blvd. (adjacent to Woodbridge Lincoln-Mercury). Turn West onto Opitz and take first left turn into the library's parking lot. The Community Room is located to your left immediately upon entering the main building.

New Members: Dues are $10/year plus $1 monthly dues (includes subscription to Current Notes). Send checks, payable to WACUG, to Mike Stringer, 709 Rutherford Dr., Fredericksburg, VA 22401.

President's Notes

By Jack Holtzhauer

WACUG's April meeting will be held at 7:00 pm on the evening of Wednesday the 24th in the Community Room of the Potomac Library located on Opitz Blvd. in Woodbridge, Virginia. The meeting's topic will be Bulletin Board Systems, modems and terminal programs.

A phone call from Sig Hartman: While deeply engrossed in watching NCAA basketball one recent Sunday afternoon, my phone rang and the caller, in a heavily accented voice, identified himself as Sig Hartmann, President of Atari Software. He said he was in his office looking over his mail and was calling to apologize for not promptly responding to a letter I had addressed to him some six-weeks before. (I had written to determine whether version C of the ATARI BASIC ROM actually existed; if so, what was the price; and why in the devil was it allegedly necessary to forward a proof-of-purchase for your computer when placing an order for the new ROM.)

Hartmann reported he and his fellow top managers had been deeply engrossed in developing ATARI's new hard/soft-ware and just hadn't had the time to devote to routine administrative tasks. He emphasized ATARI was positively Committed to developing and maintaining strong ties with the user-group community. He said he and his associates were pleased with the current link established with the UGs thru ANTIC's COMPUSERVE board, but that was hardly a best-case scenario. Hartmann also indicated the "ATARI CORP./large regional UG/small UG" communications-tree concept being floated in many of the other UG newsletters probably would not be adopted.

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Hartmann also mentioned two specific "problems" among the many ATARI is currently facing - - how to dispose of their large software inventory and beta testing of their new gear. I obviously offered to help resolve the latter matter - we can beta betta that anybody else, but he didn't jump at the opportunity.

He concluded the conversation by again underlining ATARI's promise to step-up it's user-group support program, including representation at large local shows and expos, and suggested that I write him a letter if I had any suggestions. Before I let him get off the line, I did drop a couple of suggestions on him: to re-establish ATARI's BBS as soon as possible and to limit access to UG officers, and secondly, to make use of his ever-faithful users' group network to demo ATARI-provided products.

We said good-bye. By the way, Mr. Hartmann did not have the answer to the BASIC ROM question which prompted the call. He said I would get a written response shortly. Yes, I did write a letter to Sig offering my humble suggestions. No, I haven't had a response to the ROM question.

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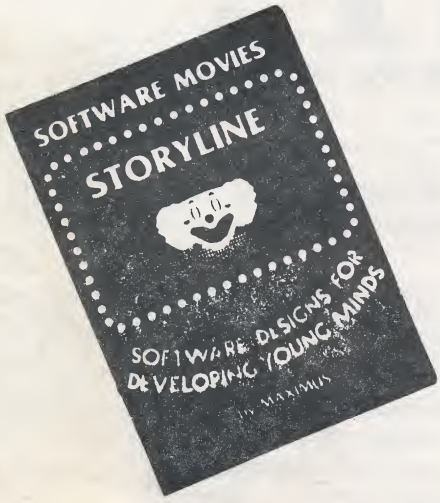

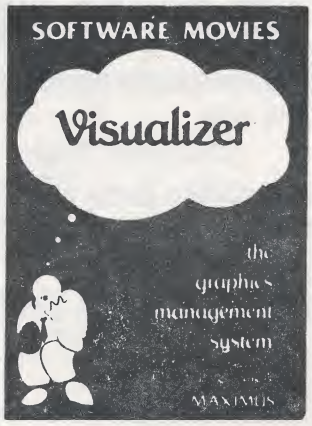

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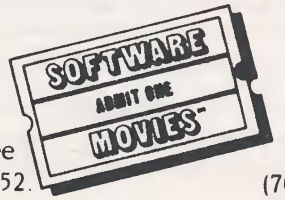

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